Seeking Iranian National Identity: An Examination of the Photography Exhibition, *Looking at Persepolis: the Camera in Iran, 1850-1930*

By

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Abstract

This thesis investigates *Looking at Persepolis* displayed at The Polygon Gallery in North Vancouver. This study examines how the exhibition reproduces an Orientalist lens and their stereotypical representations of Iran by showcasing selected photographs. Additionally, it considers their meaning in the contemporary context of Vancouver's Iranian diaspora. Based on the three levels of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995), this thesis examines the exhibition at a macro, meso and micro level. The macro-level examines the discourse of Iranian national identity in relation to the socio-cultural practices that facilitated the nation-building project of Naser al-Din Shah (1848-1896). As the thesis argues, Persepolis signified "Persian-ness" (Dabashi, 2007) in the construction of the nation's "collective imagination" (Anderson, 1983). Subsequently, the thesis examines the discursive practices of early photography in Iran, particularly European photography, in the context of colonialism and the Shah's photography institutions at a meso-level. It explores the institutional and political practices that influenced the production and consumption of photographs of the four European photographers highlighted in the exhibition. The micro-level examines The Polygon's use of these photographs to signify Persian-ness. I argue that the exhibition presents an ideal ancient civilization that encompasses a "nostalgic culture" of Iranian nationalists, especially in the diasporic community (Naficy, 2001). By juxtaposing the portrait of the Naser al-Din Shah with the photographs of Persepolis, the exhibition becomes infused with a form of Iranian nationalism that is problematically tied to longing for Iran's monarchial system. I conclude while there was an attempt to distance the image of the Iranian diasporic community from negative Western media images of the Middle East by showing photographs of the ancient site of Persepolis, the use of European photographs in the exhibition facilitates the reproduction of the same power relations between the Orient and the Occident that this thesis critically examines.

Keywords: **Early photography; Iranian national identity; Orientalism; Visual culture; diaspora; Persepolis**

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Chapter 1. Introduction

From November 2018 to January 2019, The Polygon Gallery exhibited a collection of early photographs of Iran, entitled *Looking at Persepolis*: *The Camera in Iran (1850-1930).* It is worth noting that The Polygon, located in North Vancouver, is the only major art gallery in Canada devoted to lens-based practices. *Looking at Persepolis* showcased the photographs from a collection owned by Azita Bina and Elmar Seibel — American collectors of rare books and Iranian photographs. Other exhibitions of Bina and Seibel's collection were held at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University (2015) and the Harvard Art Museum (2017), indicating the extent to which the collection has travelled nationally to the American public galleries and university museums. The Polygon's *Looking at Persepolis* spotlighted only a small number of photographs from the larger collection owned by the couple. Most of the photographs in the exhibition documented the remains of the capital of the Achaemenid Empire (550 BCE-330 BCE) between 1850 and 1930. With this focus, *Looking at Persepolis* shed light on photography during the Qajar dynasty. More importantly, it highlighted the emergence of photography in Persia, currently known as the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Initially, I planned to critique the Orientalist gaze of the exhibition, given the majority of photographs were taken by European photographers. However, as I conducted my research, it became evident that these photographs were also used to construct an Iranian identity as the country embraced modernity[1]. My analysis of the context of the production of these photographs also revealed the complex colonial and national politics in Iran's formation as a nation. Moreover, the relation of some — not all — of these European photographers to the

[1] In this study, the use of the term "modernity" is informed by the definition of Michael Payne et al. (2013). "Modernity is presented as a unique historical project for the human species, since further rationalization of the lifeworld based on communicative rationality can guarantee the promise of ENLIGHTENMENT: a life informed by reason" (ibid, capitalization in the original text, p.457)

monarchical regime and their own countries made it difficult to simply categorize them as colonial and their photographs as Oriental. Thus, this thesis explores the relationship between *Looking at Persepolis* and the discoursal production of the Iranian national identity. The thesis examines the photographs both in the context of their original Iranian and European production and use as well as their presence in North Vancouver. In this thesis, I argue *Looking at Persepolis* does not only critically investigate the Orientalist lens of the photographs but also the rejection of the presence of the colonial powers in Iran regenerates the same discourse of power between the colonizers and colonialized people. It is also essential to analyze the type of nationalism used in the exhibition it not only reproduces the colonial Orientalist lenses but also obscures the fact that the oppressive monarchs exploited and mistreated their people.

1.1. The Gallery in North Vancouver

The Polygon Gallery, formerly Presentation House Gallery, is the largest independent non-profit photography gallery in Canada. It is situated on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh, Tsleil-Waututh, and xwməθkwəy̓əm Nations. According to its website, The Polygon is a public cultural facility that is operated by the British Columbia Photography and Media Arts Society — a federally registered charity with the ongoing support from the Canada Council for the Arts, the British Columbia Arts Council, the Province of British Columbia, the City of North Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver through the North Vancouver Recreation and Culture Commission. A commitment to lens-based practices and inclusivity of a wide range of ethnocultural art practices are two central objectives outlined in the gallery's vision statement ("Who We Are," n.d.). After moving from its original site on Chesterfield Road in North Vancouver, where it shared a building with the City's museum and a theatre company, to the redeveloped waterfront area next to the Lonsdale Quay Market, the gallery has hosted many shows and exhibition tours for English, Persian (Farsi), French, Mandarin, and Spanish speaking audiences.

As a Vancouver-based practicing artist, I was thrilled to see what types of artworks would be featured in its new dynamic location. Its location near the city's central transportation hub and SeaBus terminal (roughly a 5 minutes' walk) sparked this fascination. The Polygon Gallery subsequently widened the scope of its exhibitions. The gallery offered a diverse range of lens-based practices by an equally diverse group of artists. Since its relocation in 2017, I have found many familiar names from the emerging to the established, national and international artists representing different worldviews.

According to the gallery's vision statement on its official webpage ("Who We Are," n.d.), it aims to offer a new narrative for previously Eurocentric lens-based practices by reflecting the diversity of the community:

> The Gallery is committed to championing artists and cultivating engaged audiences. Its lens of inquiry creatively responds to shifting perceptions of the world through the histories and evolving technologies of photography and related media. […] The Polygon is committed to the development of lens-based practices and to creating pathways for new voices within the medium, particularly as it works to articulate new narratives from artists traditionally outside the Eurocentric standard of many art galleries. Importantly, The Polygon prioritizes the presentation of work by artists who reflect the diversity of its community. The Gallery continues to expand its engagement with Indigenous communities, particularly the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. ("Who We Are," n.d.)

This statement celebrates local communities, particularly the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, as well as English, Persian, French, Mandarin, and Spanish-speaking audiences. *Looking at Persepolis* was informed not only by the Gallery's inclusive aim and the curatorial team, which included Helga Pakasaar (Audain Chief Curator of Polygon since 2003), Justin Ramsey (assistant curator), and Pantea Haghighi[2] (guest curator and director and curator at Republic Gallery

[2] The assistant curator of The Polygon Gallery introduced Haghigh as an Iranian artist who "boldly" opened Republic Gallery at the age of 28, right after completing her interdisciplinary graduate degree (Ramsey, "Republic Gallery Open door," 2016). Her curatorial and artistic practices "evoke global themes of movement, cultural plurality, and in-between-ness" (ibid).

in downtown Vancouver). The distinctive perspectives and cultural backgrounds of the curatorial team put them in a position to offer a different perspective than the ethnographic gaze of European photographers and their representation of the Near East, even if the exhibition alluded to the Iranian diaspora's sense of nostalgia and longing for Persepolis as a lost ancient civilization. Haghighi's curatorial practice in this exhibition and her previous shows such as *Mirrored Explosions: Sanaz Mazinani* (2016) at West Vancouver Museum and *Modernism in Iran* (2018) at Griffin gallery aimed to define contemporary Iranian identity as a sophisticated and civilized nation. Her view offers a counterbalance to the hostile Islamophobic biased representation of Iranians. *Looking at Persepolis* demonstrates a similar objective while it seeks the ideal sense of nationalism in the pre-Islamic time and under the monarchial regime.

The Polygon Gallery is operated by a federally registered Canadian charity; it relies on the financial support of the Province of British Columbia and several other government sources[3] But, the photographs and albums in *Looking at Persepolis* were a generous loan — free of charge — from the collectors.

In December 2018, Haghighi began the exhibition's second public tour by introducing the collectors and the collection owners as follows: "Azita Bina who is Iranian, and Elmar Seibel, a German dealer in rare books" (Habibullah, Field Notes, Dec 15, 2018). Seibel's interest in Renaissance books guided him to establish *Ars Libri Ltd.* According to their website:

> Ars Libri maintains a stock of out-of-print books on art as well as rare books, livres d'artiste and documents of the avant-garde. Founded in 1976, it has an international reputation as a source for scholars, collectors, artists, and everyone else with an interest in the visual arts. Ars Libri covers all periods and all fields of art history, from antiquity to the present, including architecture, archaeology, photography, and the decorative arts. ("Home," n.d.)

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[3] For example, it receives support from the Canada Council for the Arts, the British Columbia Arts Council, the Province of British Columbia, and the City of North Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver through the North Vancouver Recreation & Culture Commission ("Who We Are," n.d.).

> In addition to reference books, we specialize in rare illustrated books of art-historical interest, from the sixteenth-century architectural treatises and baroque festivities books, through classic livres d'artiste of Manet, Picasso and Matisse, and all aspects of the modern avant-garde, from dada and surrealism, futurism, and constructivism, to pop, fluxus, conceptualism, and contemporary artists' books. ("About," n.d.)

Although Ars Libri was founded to collect rare books, Seibel's deep interest in Iranian culture motivated him to gather not only a large number of exceptionally rare Iranian books but also an extraordinary collection of photographs. During the public tour on Dec. 15, 2018, Haghighi explained that Seibel's invitation to visit the photographic archive of the Golestan Palace in Iran was what initiated his interest in the photographic archive of Persepolis and Iranian books. Since then, he has been collecting albums similar to or the exact copies of the albums at the Golestan Palace. Haghighi (2018) went on to emphasize that none of Seibel's albums originally belonged to The National Archive of Iran. In some cases, the photographers produced two copies of the same album. Thus, one copy stayed in Iran, as they were commissioned by the Iranian king (Naser al-Din Shah), while the photographers left with the second copy. Haghighi ended her introduction by paraphrasing her last sentence: "none of the albums that he purchased were in Iran, for example, just prior to the opening of the exhibition, he received a call from a seller outside of Iran and purchased one of Sevruguin's albums" (Habibullah, Field Notes, Dec 15, 2018). His commitment to expand his collection of photographs of Iran and the invaluable classical books led to the formation of his collection. In 2007, Elaine Louie, a columnist for *The New York Times*, estimated that Seibel owned roughly 40,000 books on Persian and Iranian culture.

> There is a 1491 copy of a medical book written by Avicenna, the 11th century philosopher and physician also known as Ibn Sina. A 17th century eyewitness account of the coronation of a shah, written by Jean Chardin, a French jeweler, is inscribed to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, then the Finance Minister of France. A 19th century cookbook has

> 4,000 handwritten recipes of dishes made for the shah's court. […] "What holds the house together is a vertical staircase that wraps itself around a tower of books that goes up three floors," Mr. Tehrani said. (The family lives on the top three floors, while Ms. Bina's mother, Aghdas Zoka-Bina, and a tenant occupy apartments on the first and ground-floor levels.) The stairway ends just below a skylight. "The tower of books appears to pierce the skylight, though it doesn't in reality," Mr. Tehrani said. (Louie, 2007)

In November 2018, the public tour guided by Seibel (accompanied by Haghighi and Bina) was a history lesson for me; I was amazed by the depth of his knowledge. While he did not carry any written notes, but his talk on the photographers, their mission to Iran, and the political context was precise and supported by references made to published or on-going researches. During the question-and-answer session, he pointed to the most recent study by Corien Vuurman (2015), a Dutch scholar interested in travel journals and reports of European travelers in Iran between 1858 and 1928 (Habibullah, Field Notes, Nov 03, 2018). Vururman's dissertation research[4] examines a substantial number of European journals stored in the Legatum Warnerianum and the Eastern section of the Leiden University Library in the Netherlands (Vuurman, 2015, p.19). She conducted a textual and visual analysis of drawings and photographs of travel journals (ibid). When I asked for more details, Seibel enthusiastically shared a photo of her doctoral thesis, *Fascinatie Voor Persepolis* (2015), with me and noted, "unfortunately, this work is not available in English" (Habibullah, Field Notes, Nov 03, 2018). My elaboration on Seibel's desire to promote scholarly works shows that his practices as a "collector-owner" of rare books differ greatly from the "Bibliomaniacal traditions" of the nineteenth century — a time when collectors translated their "ownership" to "authorship" of books and actively played a role in knowledge production by altering original books. Jon Klancher

[4] Though Corien J.Vuurman published her scholarly works in English, she completed her Ph.D. dissertation in Dutch at Radboud University. As I do not speak in Dutch, all translations from Dutch to English, were made with assistance of one of my Dutch-speaking family members, who would like to remain anonymous.

(2009), in his essay, “Wild Bibliography: The Rise and Fall of Book History in the Nineteenth-Century Britain,” points to the common practice of “collector-producer(s)” by discussing the consequences of the extensive alteration of a codex by its collector-owner, who dismantled the codex and added hundreds of engravings to the original book of Mathis (p.30) in the nineteenth century.

In contrast, Seibel’s close collaboration with the researchers and scholars allows for in-depth studies of his collection. This is important as the albums in the Golestan Palace are locked behind closed doors. As Jennifer Y. Chi, the exhibition director and chief curator of Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW), writes as the curator of the exhibition, *The Eye of the Shah Qajar Court Photography and the Persian Past* (2015-2016), her point of departure was formed after hours of discussion with Bina and Seibel (Chi, 2015, pp.128-132). The conversation with the couple about the Qajar and contemporary photography led Chi to present Qajar photography along with the contemporary re-imaginations of the Qajar.

1.2. Iranian Context

As the exhibition’s catalogue (2018) indicated, *Looking at Persepolis* — with images that were originally displayed as framed photographs and in albums — focused on early photography in Iran. Photography was introduced to Naser al-Din Shah amid political instability in Iran. While the main theme of the collection was the ancient site of Persepolis in Iran, in the exhibition’s catalogue (2018), the guest curator, Pantea Haghighi, underscored the symbolic value of the site:

> Nevertheless, over the course of Iran’s politically turbid history, the majesty of Persepolis’s remains — including its grand staircases, Darius’s palace (Tachara), and the pillared hall (Apadana) — has often been looked back on as a symbol of a powerful, indigenous Persian heritage. Comprehensive excavations of the Persepolitan ruins began in the mid-1800s, during the Qajar dynasty (1794-1925), an era that saw major wars, a nearly bankrupt government,

> technological revolutions, and sweeping constitutional reform. The camera entered Iran around this same time: 1842, only three years after the daguerreotype process was published in Paris. This new mode of image-making quickly gained traction at the Qajar court, competing with the large-scale, mytho-heroic portraits typically commissioned by the shahs, and in time, photography began to influence the techniques of court painter as realism came into fashion. (p.3)

The guest curator's focus on the symbolic value of Persepolis brought forward the idea of the glorious ancient past, which is an important source of Iranians' pride. For Iran[5], the ruins of Persepolis, known in Persian as Takht-e Jamshid (Jamshid's Throne), which are located in the valley of Marvdasht, were the site of the capital of the Achaemenid Empire, which dates back to 515 BCE. Given its long history, the site of ruins of Persepolis has become a national symbol of Iran and, especially Persian identity, inking them to the great Persian Empire. However, not all Iranians are Persians; the emphasis on Persian-ness therefore disregards other ethnic groups (Kurdish, Turkish, Armenian and etc.) in the country (I will discuss the significance of Persian identity more in Chapter 2). During Achaemenid's time, the Persian Empire's land stretched East to West from India to the Mediterranean and Egypt, and North to South from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf. Persepolis signifies Iranian national identity with 2,600 years' history of civilization (1977). Achaemenid rock reliefs and inscriptions found on the site demonstrate that Achaemenid consider themselves Aryans or descendants of the Aryan race[6] (Mousavi, 2012, p.56). In the collective

[5] To distinguish different regimes that governed Iran, I will use the following names: Persia, Iran and Islamic Republic of Iran all of which refer to current Iran. The ancient Persia for the first time was renamed to Iran by Reza Pahlavi in 1925. After the Islamic revolution of 1979, two words of "Islamic" and "Republic" were added to the name of Iran.

[6] Aryan is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as a term that refers "to the great division or family of languages, which includes Sanskrit, Zend, Persian, Greek, Latin, Celtic, Teutonic, and Slavonic" (Oxford Online English Dictionary: Oxford University Press, n.d.). However, in the nineteenth century, the term Aryan was given a new meaning by Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1855). In his essay on *the Inequality of Human Races,* he linked Aryan with the theory of the essential inferiority of certain races. The term 'Aryan race' was later revived and used in the political propaganda of Nazi Germany (Mosse, 2020). In Chapter 4, I will discuss the nuances of this theory

imagination of Iranians, Persepolis portrays the ancestral land that "serves as free and democratic, just and inspiring, ideal for contemporary nation-state" (Dabashi, 2007, p.22).

Despite the significance of the site for the Iranian identity, *Looking at Persepolis* showcased the photographic practices of Europeans in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century in Iran. Simultaneously, these photographs captured the arrival of the daguerreotype process as the introduction of the European technological advancements for image-making. The timeframe of the photographs in the exhibition between the 1850s and 1930s encompassed groundbreaking events that led to the introduction of modernity in Iran. In Chapter 2, I will discuss how Iranian modernization[7] was produced as the result of importing European scientific developments.

1.3. Iranian Diasporic Community in North Vancouver

The Polygon Gallery is located in North Vancouver, where the largest community of Iranian descent in the Lower Mainland lives. Broadly speaking, the landscape of North Vancouver is saturated with the signs and symbols of Iranian-Canadian businesses as well as arts and cultural activities. However, Iranian-Canadians make up 6,235 of the total of 84,875 individuals with ethnic origins residing in private households of North Vancouver. According to the most recent Census of Population Program (2016) on the Statistics Canada website, the Iranian community forms 47,985 of the 4,560,490 residents in British Columbia with ethnic origins. The gallery's careful choice of public tours in both English and Persian (Farsi) corresponded to the large number of the Iranian diaspora in North

of race in relation to the photography expedition of Hans Wickart von Buss, the German photographer whose photographs of Persepolis were on the display in *Looking at Persepolis.*

[7] As noted above, in this study, the use of the term "modernity" is informed by the definition of Michael Payne et al. (2013). More specifically, in relation to Iran, modernity as "[the incomplete project of enlightenment] reflects the wider historical process of colonialism during which a specific (European) present was imposed as the measure of social progress on a global scale. It is within the framework of this kind of definition of the 'modern' that the term 'modernization' came to be used in the United States after the 1939 – 45 war to refer to a form of social and economic 'development' in Third World countries, modeled on a particular version of the history of capitalism in the West" (ibid, 641).

Vancouver. Personally, I found it surreal to come across a mainstream public gallery with the colossal image of the Achaemenid relief covering half of the gallery's façade as a way to advertise the exhibition.

Yet, despite the exhibition's location in a municipality with a high concentration of Iranian-Canadian arts activities, I encountered only a few visitors from visible minorities in the gallery, including those of Iranian descent, during the tours I attended. My observation did not systematically cover the entire period of the exhibition or a regular business day, but it challenged my assumptions about the intended audience of *Looking at Persepolis.* In the beginning, I assumed the photography exhibition of the capital of Achaemenid was designed for the Iranian gaze in North Vancouver, but as I conducted my analysis, as I will discuss, it became evident that the discursive construction of Persian identity through photographic images of the ancient site, from what I observed, did not attract the Iranians who resided in North Vancouver (see in Chapter 5).

The gallery collaborated with Pantea Haghighi, an Iranian-Canadian curator with extensive experience in curating contemporary Iranian exhibitions and given the gallery's vision statement, was a way to embrace and reflect the ethnic diversity of the art community in Vancouver. Seeking to understand the appeal of the exhibition to the local Iranian community, I borrow from Naficy's concept of "exile." Conceptualized in his study of the Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles, the exile "refers to individuals or groups who voluntarily or involuntarily have relocated outside of their original habitus" (1993, p.16). studying Iranian television in Los Angeles, "[Naficy] provides commentary on the aesthetic techniques employed by emigrant filmmakers to express displacement and exile" (Dina, p.154, 2019). His discussion about "the accented films" points to the distinctive narrative styles and camera movements that reconstruct temporal and spatial images of the homeland on the screen. The re-creation of nostalgia by making "the authentic culture productions," defines and seeks Iranian national identity in Persian identity and aims to distance itself from the contemporary Islamic Republic of Iran. While this type of nostalgia underscores the Iranian diaspora's strong sense of attachment to their homeland even after leaving, it links the

Iranian diaspora to the pre-Islamic identity in the diverse ethnic media landscape in Los Angeles.

I argue that the common theme of nostalgia in the exile culture (Naficy, 1993) is relevant for my analysis of the exhibition. Diasporic nostalgia manifested itself in the form of references to the glorious past in the guest curator's statement. Yue (2004) describes this sense of nostalgia as "[…] a form of yearning about the anticipated loss" (p.77). "Hence, exile functions as a trope for the different journeys of migration encountered by the diasporic protagonists [community]" (Yue, 2004, p.18). A key point here is to understand the process of leaving one's homeland as a transition leading to physical displacement as well as social and psychological dislocation (ibid, pp.14-17). In this sense, the very specific definition of Persian-ness, which is linked to the people from ancient Persia who were associated with Achaemenid, facilitates cultural intimacy "as the social glue" for all different groups of "exile culture" (Naficy, 1985). Their tendency to preserve or restore signifiers of the homeland becomes a remedy to the grief of departure (Naficy, 1993; Safran, 1991). Naficey (1995) argues that grief distinguishes Iranians' longing for the return to the homeland:

> Whereas in some societies, the expression of anger is central to the assertion of selfhood and self-worth, in Iranian society the experience and competent communication of sadness and grief is essential to establish personal depth. (p.391)

In fact, this grief is an essential part of the Iranian national identity in the diaspora. On the same topic, Mozaffari (2014) identifies the source of this sadness in the past. According to Mozaffari, an authentic reminder of the homeland that helps alleviate the sorrow of the loss of homeland usually appears in the form of references to the pre-Islamic history of Iran.

> The resurrection of a pre-Islamic identity is bound to a pre-Islamic or archaistic imagination, referring to the reconstitutions of the 'primordial origins' of Iranian peoples and their homeland. […] Pre-Islamic identity began with an "Aryan" awareness during the

> Achaemenid period and led to the formation of the “idea of Iran” with political connotations in Sassanian[8] times.’ (Mozaffari, 2014, p.34)

It is possible to see how the mythologized Achaemenid capital is transformed into the idea of the source of contemporary Iran as a collectively imagined idea of the Iranian homeland. This mythologized land has been involved in constructing a pre-Islamic identity narrative that traces back the ancestral lineage of Iranians to antiquity (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001; Kashani-Sabet, 2011).

Looking at the exhibition in relation to diasporic Iranians, Persepolis has become a space of imagination that is beyond physical reach. It exists through its surviving artifacts, images or even architectural imitations in other buildings far from its original lands. As Mousavi (2012) concludes, “Persepolis has become a prehistoric monument that represents the symbolic space of the Iranian “collective identity” similar to what Benedict Anderson (1983) defines as “imagined communities.” It is […] imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (p.6). In this view, Persepolis as the site of the ancient civilization — encompassing the memory of a prehistoric civilization with an emphasis on the Aryan race — contains the mythical memory of a site that never was or will be similar to what is present. Moreover, over the past two centuries, it has become a site whose meaning is always being negotiated to cultivate national identifications of contemporary Iran (Debevoise and Herzfeld, 1937; Mozaffari, 2014).

On the one hand, in contemporary Iran, Persepolis conveys the sense of collective identity that is intertwined with a mutual “King-subject” relationship under the Achaemenid Empire (Mozaffari, 2014, p.42). On the other hand, after the Islamic revolution of 1979, the Islamic regime has distanced itself from Iran’s pre-Islamic history since such glorifying references to the Achaemenid Empire

[8] The Sassanian Empire, also spelled Sassanid, was an ancient Persian dynasty and the major power in the Near East (224- 651 CE).

are viewed as legitimizing the monarchial paradigm. The contemporary Iranian regime views taking pride in the Persian heritage as interrupting the current notions of Iranian-ness, which considers Muslim-ness as essential. Voicing concerns and urging the preservation of the site — whether by monarchists or Iranian Officials — is potentially considered as a threat to the Islamic regime of Iran. Mostafavi Kashani's analogy of the capital of Achaemenid as "House of God" or "Mecca" for the capital of Achaemenid exemplifies the integral threat of this contested site for the contemporary religious regime.

> No doubt, just as it is a must for every Muslim who can afford and meets the requirements [criteria] to make the pilgrimage to the 'House of God' [Mecca], every Iranian with the means has to visit Persepolis for the sake of nationality and learning of the history and civilization of our beloved country […] as every year from cities near and afar numerous groups of students and many interested people and important personalities, especially during Nowrooz holidays make the pilgrimage to these monuments and are elated by the sight of undeniable and tangible evidence of the greatness of ancient Iran […]. (Kashani quoted in Mozaffari, 2014, p.42)

In the mid-twentieth century, years before the Islamic revolution, Mastafavi Kashani, the former director of Persepolis, drew parallels between the national significance of the site and the sacred site for Muslims. His use of the term "pilgrimage" during Norooz, the Iranian New year, implies that visiting Persepolis during the country's annual national holidays is like a religious ritual. Simultaneously, Persepolis challenges the mainstream narrative of the contemporary Islamic regime that prioritizes Islamic values with Iranian identity.

1.4. Developing My Analytic Approach

I began this thesis with intending to conduct a narrative analysis of *Looking at Persepolis.* I initially was interested in exploring the exhibition in relation to its intended audience, the Iranian diasporic community. However, after completing my literature review, as mentioned above, I realized the context of the

production of the photographs was more complex than I thought. Thus, in this thesis, I aim to provide an in-depth analysis of the discourses of power that determined the context of production and reception of the photographs between the 1850s and 1930s. Regarding colonial representations of the Orient, Edward Said (1978) writes:

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborating theories, epics, novels, social description, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on. (p.2)

As Said explains, Orientalism and the European gaze contribute to the West's production of the notion of the "Orient" and the "Occident", and binaries like "savages" versus the "civilized" people. For this reason, I needed to examine the institutional powers that dominated early photography, and as such, the work of each of the three photographers highlighted in *Looking at Persepolis*.

1.5. Research Question and the Overview of Chapters

To situate Persepolis, the site of the Persian Empire, in relation to the contemporary discourses of Iranian identity. I first ask what does the site represents throughout contemporary Iranian history, from the Qajar dynasty in the 1800s to the current Islamic Republic of Iran? How is contemporary understanding of the Persian Empire, both nationally and internationally, informed by the early archeological excavations of Europeans in Iran? Why was the site a source of the fascination of Europeans? To answer these questions, in Chapter 2, I contextualize Persepolis and the socio-political discourses of Iran, which facilitated the arrival of the colonial powers to the country. I demonstrate

the significance of early archeological expeditions as the starting point for the European presence in Iran. I argue, in fact, the presence of European photographers was the continuation of the long-term colonialism project. At the same time, I acknowledge that historically Iran was never colonialized with another country governing its population, running its economy and social institutions while occupying its territories and establishing a colony[9]. Thus, before the revolution of 1979, the Iranian monarchs always maintained their royal title as the rulers of the country, even though European representatives in the court played a significant role in the political scene of the country. For this purpose, I refer to the primary documents written by the early European travellers. As Etherington (2005) urges, researchers should "[add] validity and rigour in research by providing information about the context in which data are located" (p.37). My analysis thus includes archival research and information from European travel journals as well as reports of archaeological excavations. Since I do not have access to all the travel journals from this period, I will draw on Vuurman's research (2015). I also rely on the online archive of the University of Chicago to access archeological reports from the beginning of the twentieth century. Many of the early European visitors of pre-historic sites in Iran were interested in smuggling ancient artifacts as souvenirs from the Orient. In some rare cases, they — like James Morier (1782-1849), a well-known British diplomat — documented their operations at Persepolis and justified how removing and stealing sections of the structures was necessary for saving the invaluable evidence of an ancient civilization from the destruction by incapable locals (1818, p.75).

In Chapter 3, I will explore the emergence of photography in Iran to answer why most of the photographers presented in the exhibition are Europeans? I ask how did the first photographic process arrive in Iran? Whose gaze was behind the apparatus? And who could and who did practice

[9] Although Iran was never officially colonialized, it was heavily under the political, economic and military influence of Russians, the British, and the French.

photography? What were the common subjects of early photography? I will explore the historical events that led to the arrival of the first daguerreotype camera to the royal court.

In this chapter, at a more conceptual level, I introduce the two dominant lenses of photography: the Orientalist lens and the Shah's lens. The Chapter draws attention to two overarching photographic practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. On the one hand, early photography was utilized in the nation-building project of the monarch, and therefore during this time, the camera was used as a propaganda tool to produce powerful representations of the Shah. Collections of these types of photographs were presented as "Pictorial Reports," which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. On the other hand, the European lens contributed to the ethnographic discourses about Iran, particularly the construction of Iran as the Orient. In Chapter 3, I also ask, what was the indigenous style of photography in Iran, if any?

Chapter 4 examines the identity and institutional practices of the four photographers highlighted in the exhibition: Marcel-Auguste Dieulafoy (1844-1920), Luigi Pesce (1828-1864), Hans Wichart von Busse (1903-1962) and Antoin Sevruguin (1870-1933). Their works reveal different political agendas and institutional practices while illustrating the chronological developments of photography show the shifts in the prevailing political ideology of the photographic practices. In this chapter, I delve into primary documents such as travel journals and archeological reports to explore the nature of their projects. What guided the photographers to Iran? Were they the political diplomats, the professional photographers, the archeologists or even the researchers of the Near East? My thesis benefits from a substantial body of literature written by the photo-historians who pioneered early photography studies in Iran. I use these "secondary sources" (Deacon et al.,1999, pp. 15-20) to check what research has been done on early photography history in Iran. Particular notes are studies by Iraj Afshar (1983), Yahya Zoka (1983 and 1997) and Chahryar Adel (1985). They are three early photo-historians who had the opportunity to access the photography archive in the Golestan Palace and produced their writings in

Persian. They analyzed the early photographs and originally published their analysis in *Iranica*[10] — a twelve-volume encyclopedia that has been published since 1973, which was updated and digitalized until 2011. I also refer to the close study of photography in the Naseri[11] time (1848-1896) by Mohammad-Reza Tahmasbpour (2002). I refer to their accounts of the history of the development of image-making technology in Iran and the formation of the royal collection.

In Chapter 5, I investigate how the juxtaposition of the curatorial statement, the photographs, and the albums in The Polygon Gallery — which were determined by the gallery and shaped by its mandate and the choices made by the curatorial team — represented the ideal homeland of Persians. I also examine promotional materials about *Looking at Persepolis* available either at the exhibition, such as the exhibition's catalogue or from the outside sources like the interview with the guest curator published in *North Shore News*, as well as the website of The Polygon Gallery, which includes their statement about the commitment to inclusivity and lens-based media. Despite the predominant use of European photographers in *Looking at Persepolis*, the guest curator did not think their works, and thus the exhibition might have an Orientalist lens. Since all the European photographers arrived in Iran as a part of different military, archeological and other missions, I argue that the power relations during the production of the photographs reproduce a colonial perspective of the Orient, in other words, they are part of the Orientalist project (Said, 1979). I thus argue that lack of critical analysis of the roots of theses photographs leads to self-Orientalization in the exhibition. For instance, as I argue in Chapter 5, the scenography in the photographs that dominate the exhibition represents the theme of nostalgia found in the diaspora, particularly in North Vancouver, which has been home to a large diasporic community of Iranian. For this reason, I

[10] Dr. Ehsan Yarshater, an Iranian linguist and historian, founded and edited the encyclopedia Iranica between 1973 to 2011.

[11] During the Naseri time or the reign of Naser al-Din Shah (1848-1896), which coincides with the Victorian era, Iran opened its doors to enhance the political and economic relations with European countries. While three colonial powers Russians, the British and French were present in the Iranian royal court before Naser al-Din Shah, the British diplomats and military personals had the most control over Iran's economy and politics during the Naseri time.

argue it is important to critically analyze the types of nationalism that members of the Iranian diaspora use in the public events and media productions because they can reproduce both colonial, Orientalist relations and hide the oppressive regimes, that do not respect democracy.

1.6. Research Design: Identifying the Research Framework

As I indicated above, I am not using a single methodology, nor one that is particular to the medium of photography. Instead, my research on photography focuses on Iran's nation-building project and examines a wide range of objects, institutions, practices, political and cultural events that influence early forms of photographic practices in Iran. "Photographic images have a material and symbolic significance that act as important vehicles of communication: communication that contributes to the fabric of social relations" (Harrison, 2004, p.116). As Weindtraub (2009) writes, "photographs never stand alone; they are always links in a chain of meaning, along with other associated photographs" (p.199). *Looking at Persepolis* combined photographs and written texts, including the curatorial statement and the exhibition catalogue. This combination produced the discourse of memories of ancient Persia or, in other words, the past (between 1850 and 1930) as "communication products" (Fairclough, 1995, p.57).

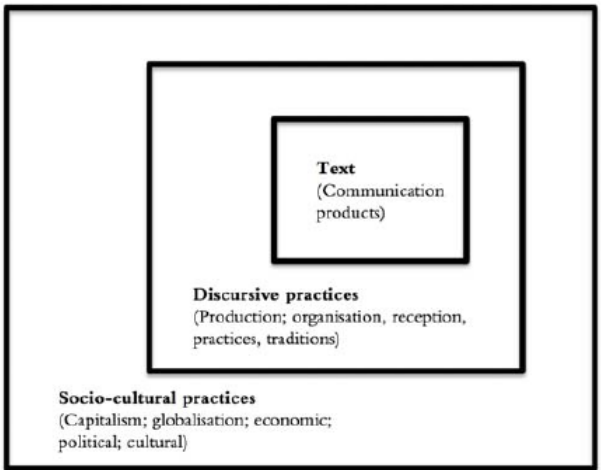

Figure 1 Norman Fairclough's framework for analysis of media texts and their operation (Drotner, Kline & Murray, 2003)

To study the power relations at work in the socially constructed meaning of Persepolis, as it functions as a powerful symbol for Iranian identity, I draw on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In the CDA framework (Figure 1), the study of "communication products" takes place in three levels: (1) the "micro-level" is the detailed analysis of texts, including both an analysis of linguistic and other semiotic features; (2) the "meso-level" includes the processes of production, distribution and consumption; and (3) the "macro-level" considers socio-cultural practices that embrace "discursive practices" and "communication products" (Fairclough, 1988, pp.144-45; 2009, pp.351-55). Since the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* spotlight Persepolis during the rise of Iranian modernization, (in Chapter 2) I begin by discussing the socio-political discourses about Iran as a country during the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties. I next explain the presence of the colonial powers in the royal court and the political and cultural ramifications of European archeological expeditions at the site of Persepolis. At the "macro-level", I discuss the introduction and the use of photography in Iran during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and its use in the Shah's nation-building project in Chapter 3. At the "meso-level" (Chapter 4), I focus on the four dominant photographers featured in *Looking at Persepolis* and the political,

cultural, and economic processes that impacted the production and consumption of their photographs. In Chapter 5, I will provide a detailed analysis and examination of the exhibition and the photographs at the "micro-level."

In Chapter 5, to unpack the discourses regarding Iranian national identity in *Looking at Persepolis* and its presentation by each photographer, I conduct a thematic analysis focusing on the content of the photographs. I first list the photographers chronologically from the oldest (the 1850s) to the most recent ones (the 1930s). For the second step, I identify how many items from each photographer were included in the exhibition. I distinguish the number of the single photograph from the album and identify the thematic patterns of the content of each separately. The benefit of this approach is that it allows me to show whose photographic lens dominates *Looking at Persepolis*, and more importantly, what version of Iranian identity is discursively produced by each set of photographs. Thus, I avoid generalizing and evoking an overarching conclusion for all diverse photographic practices of these photographs, even though they were all produced during the Qajar era.

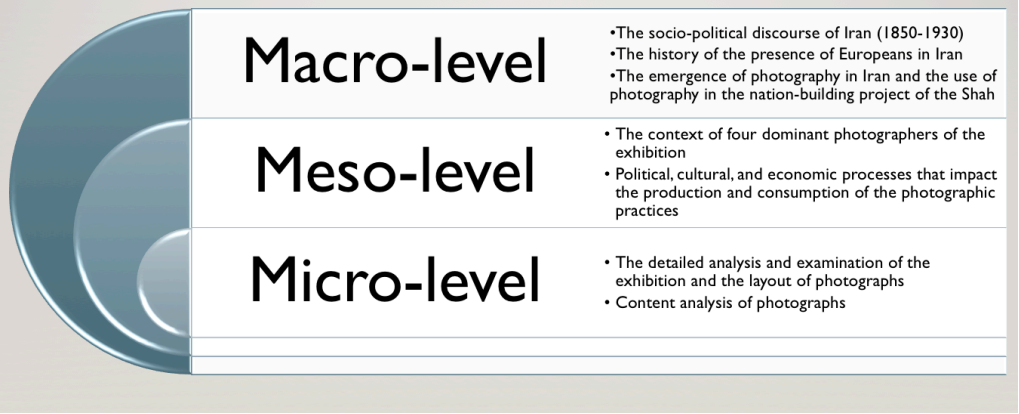

Figure 2 Three levels of Critical Discourse Analysis in this study based on Fairclough's model (1995)

While I narrate my analysis through my perspective as a member of the Iranian diaspora, I inevitably rely on "explicit knowledge" (Richardson, 2000) from my life experiences. This type of knowledge production or meaning-making is in part based on my past experiences and thus, requires me to develop a method to acknowledge my positionality through reflexive writing. As Laurel Richardson

(2000) states, reflexivity in research writing, which she has described as a "narrative analysis," is when "we find ourselves attending to feelings, ambiguities, temporal sequences, blurred experiences, and so on" (p.931). I began my analysis by being attentive to my experience and emotions, including my memories from the visits to Persepolis and the paradoxical feelings between the pristine photographs of geometrical buildings of Persepolis in the exhibition and what I remembered from my visit to the site. From this position, I am critical and enact a purposeful self-reflection, which has been essential for my analysis. My departure point for this study was curiosity about what I viewed as an unusual representation of Iranian identity and national heritage, which involves my own identity, specifically, through European photography.

As Romy Clark and Roz Ivanic (1997) explain, the identity of the writer cannot be separated from the writing (p.134). In their cloverleaf model (see in Figure 3), the authors introduce three main elements of writer's identity:

> The autobiographical-self: the writer's life-history and sense of her/his roots, (2) the self as [an] author: the writer's sense of authority, and authorial presence in the text and (3) the discoursal self: the writer's representation of her/himself in the text. (Clark and Ivanic, 1997, p.137).

While my life-history as an Iranian migrant influences my sense of authority to critically study *Looking at Persepolis,* being attentive to my experiences requires me to acknowledge "the autobiographical self" in relation to the role of Persepolis in the formation of "the sense of my roots," which enable me to re-evaluate my assumptions about the photographs in the exhibition. In the rest of this chapter, I will discuss my experience from visiting Persepolis in-person and seeing early photographs of the site at The Polygon Gallery.

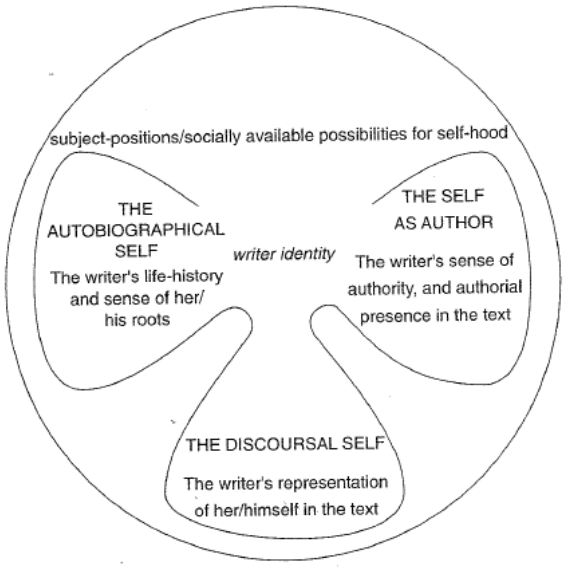

Figure 3 Aspects of a writer's identity (Clark and Ivanic, 1977, p.137)

1.7. My Story

As I was conducting my research, I kept asking myself, why did I feel alienated during my visit? After writing a number of proposals over a period of a year, studying various methodological approaches, and many hours of meeting with Dr. Kirsten McAllister, my senior supervisor, and Dr. Daniel Ahadi, my supervisor, I found what was troubling for me. Upon my arrival at the Polygon Gallery, I realized *Looking at Persepolis*[12] was everything it claimed to be, but

[12] On my way to the gallery, as I passed by Lonsdale Quay market entrance, I was confronted by the two totem poles enacted as a reminder of the colonial lands. I immediately recorded my observation in my research notebook, and left a note for further research. After hours of online search for the names of the poles, I finally found a map of public art on the City of North Vancouver's website; the names of the totem poles with a short description of their artists read as (1) totem of Eagle, Story of a Boy by Joseph Stanley (1983), and (2) Sun Totem by Mark George (1993). The peculiar juxtaposition of these two artworks and the immense poster of ancient Persia installed at the entrance of The Polygon Gallery created an astonishing scene with juxtaposing the totem poles with the poster of Achaemenid rock relief. Though I am not sure how to conclude, it is crucial to acknowledge the poster, which took over almost the half of The Polygon Gallery's façade, points to the ancient cultures and indigeneity on the colonized indigenous lands of the Skwxwú7mesh and Tsleil-Waututh nations.

At the beginning of my research, I assumed the City of North Vancouver had detailed information about its collection of public art. But after contacting the City's, Lori Phillips, a Public Art Officer for

nothing even comparable to what I remembered from the site of Persepolis itself. Almost a decade ago, when I visited the ruins for the last time, a crowd of thousands of tourists — mostly Iranian — added an extra layer over the architecture. As the crowd of people were trying to respectfully navigate through space, some were climbing up to see the details of the rock reliefs or carving the rock reliefs to engrave their names. I was astonished as it was the first time that I wished for the presence of security guards, but their office was located by the entrance and out of my reach.

Just before my arrival, one of the worst dust storms in years hit the region and made my visit even more challenging. Finally, when I took shelter in the modest bookstore located in a quiet corner before Sad-Sotun (the Hundred Columns Hall), I had a chance to see the magnificent architecture of Persepolis through the postcards and picture books. A substantial number of photographs depicted a sublime view of the ruins with the backdrop of vivid sunsets. I immediately fell in love with the irresistible beauty of the images and left the bookstore with a book in my hand. Years after my last visit, I still feel joy whenever I flip through the book and look at the dreamy scenes illustrated in the images. At the same time, I feel heartbroken thinking about the ongoing damage to artifacts by environmental and human factors.

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the City, informed me the project was funded by The Lonsdale Quay, and therefore "[Only they] may have a file on this project." Despite the lack of information, I am grateful that Phillips replied my emails as it was the only response that I received after reaching out to many cultural and community centers. To find more information on these projects, Skwxwú7mesh Nation and Tsleil-Waututh Nation, the City of Vancouver, the Lonsdale Quay, and Vancouver archive are just a few names from my long contact list.

Lori Phillips, briefly shared her information about the Sun totem as follows, "I know that this totem was carved on the site at Lonsdale Quay during the summer months, then it was raised at its current location. The carver Mark George is from the Tsleil-Waututh Nation." According to Tsleil-Waututh Nation webpage (http://volcano.resist.ca/2004/tsleil_waututh_nation.html), George Mark is the recognized indigenous artist, who has contributed to public art throughout the lower mainland in Vancouver. On the same page, George Mark is named amongst the contributing artists to Cates Park; "The Nation's use of the Park [Cates park or Whey-ah-Wichen] goes beyond an archaeological forum, but is centered in member's daily and annual activities. Community celebrations such as traditional canoe races (held in the 1990s) bring out the community as it hosts other Salish Nations, and First Nations from around the continent. Some efforts have been made to restore representation of Tsleil-Waututh culture in the park, including installed work by artist Damien George, a new entrance sign by Glen George, and proposed work by Mark George" (Volcano Resist, 2004).

While it is a privilege to research and represent my cultural heritage, as I understood from growing up in Iran and living in Vancouver, the goal is to be transparent about my subjective interpretations. As I describe the photographs and conclude with an analysis of the exhibition's Orientalist gaze in the exhibition, I am constantly influenced by my experiences. During my first visit to *Looking at Persepolis*, it did not take me long to realize the paradoxical nature of the European photographs of the monumental Iranian site showcased in The Polygon Gallery. I was struck by strong, ambivalent feelings towards the photographs in the collection and the pristine geometrical buildings in particular. My initial feelings were sparked due to my familiarity with the context of the Achaemenid's capital, and especially Persepolis. As Clark and Ivanic (1997) describe, my perception was that my understanding of my heritage is informed by my "life-history" and the "sense of [my] roots," which they name "autobiographical-self" (p.137). According to Clark and Ivanic (1997), the sense of familiarity with my cultural heritage resulted in the source of what was my initial hasty conclusion.

The discussion about my previous travels and my interpretation from *Looking at Persepolis* is to acknowledge my positionality and build on it for a richer understanding of the context of the production of these photographs in Iran and their reception by Iranians in the diaspora. Thus, the earlier discussion about my personal view can "act as a source of privileged knowledge" (Hamdan, 2012, p.585). By juxtaposing the story of my travels to Persepolis with my experience encountering the photographs at The Polygon Gallery, I want the reader to encounter two different angles of my positionality.

Chapter 2. The Discourse of Persepolis and Persian Identity Narrative

2.1. Persepolis as the Contested Land of the Persian Empire

This chapter draws attention to the significance of Persepolis in the discourse of Persian identity as a nation. At the macro-level, the discussion about the socio-political status of Iran during the Qajars contextualizes the long-lasting domination of the colonial powers over the economy and politics of the country. The ruins of Achaemenids capital (550 BCE) in Fars, and later, the homeland of Sassanian (247 BCE), have always been an integral part of Iranian identity. As a signifier of the Persian Empire, Persepolis provides archeological evidence of the glorious past and remarkable cultural materials for Persian identity. Since the nineteenth century, the idea of the ancient past has always marked the memory of successive generations throughout the history of Iran. In particular, Persepolis is recognized as an ancestral monument. It transcends the physical site and is a source of Iranian pride. Despite the importance of the site, there are many unknowns about the history and the architecture of the buildings because of the decades of smuggling artifacts to Europe and North America, especially between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries and the extensive damage caused by devastating wars from the fourth century onwards. Trafficking artifacts by Europeans led to the loss of archeological evidence and contributed to the further destruction of the architecture, it, therefore, deepened the mystification of the legendary past for Iranians in the twenty-first century (Mousavi, 2012; Mozaffari, 2014).

The history of the destruction of the site goes back to the Greek conquest in Persia. In 330 BCE, when Persepolis was demolished and set on fire by Alexander the Great, the ancient Greeks ruled the Achaemenid territory for nearly two more centuries. Scholars have speculated over the details of the intense and complex relationship between Iranians and Greeks from 540 BCE to approximately 330 BCE (Mousavi, 2012, pp.62-70). However, many historians

believe one of the possible motives for Alexander's invasion could be deliberate revenge for the burning of the Acropolis of Athens during the Second Persian War by Xerxes (Diod. Sic. 17.17.1; Just., Epit. 11.5.10). After the Macedonian retaliation in the heartland of the Persian Plateau, the capital of the Achaemenid in Fars was left to erode. In the following years, the Persian lands suffered from a lack of a central power, which postponed the reconstruction and preservation of the site. Finally, the next Empire that ruled Persia between 224 and 651CE was Sassanian. Though this new dynasty was Persian, they did not seem to know the name of Persepolis. Based on the inscriptions engraved by the Sassanian Kings between 247 BCE and 224 CE at Persepolis, they referred to the place through their visual descriptions of the site like Sad- Sotun (Hundred Columns) (Briant, 2002; Wiesehofer, 1994; Bosworth, 1980). Though it is unclear the extent to which Sassanian knew the history of the Achaemenid Empire, it is evident that they had no access to the ancient Persian language to decode the remains of the Achaemenid's inscriptions (Mozaffari, 2014, p.106; Zia-Ebrahimi, 2016, p.7).

Later warfare and in particular Muslim conquest — the Arab invasion (650 CE), caused the loss of the ancient Persian language after Arabic became the official language of Persia. Arabs also banned the public practice of Zoroastrianism — the official religion of Achaemenid (Nicolle, 2009, pp.17-20). The two major dynasties that ruled Iran throughout the medieval period were the two Turkish dynasties, the Ghaznavids (997-1186) and the Seljuqids (1040-1220), both of which continued to be considered as expanding the Islamic territories (Dabashi, 2007, pp.15-30). The Mongol invasion (1219-1258) and the series of battles between Persia and the Ottoman Empire through the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries turned Persepolis into a battlefield. In the early sixteenth century, Europeans gained political momentum. Finally, three colonial powers — Russian, British and French — reached Persia in roughly the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century (ibid). This thesis focuses on this last period of foreign occupation and damage to Persepolis.

2.2. Qajar Dynasty: Top-Down Modernity in Iran or Colonial Modernity

The long history of Europe's colonial powers over the Qajar court goes back to the early nineteenth century, long before the reign of Naser al-Din Shah. After the first Russo-Persian War (1804-1813), Qajars abandoned some sections of the northern provinces to Russians under the Golestan Treaty (1813).

> The French and British colonial officers were now in the Qajar court, competing against each other in their efforts to convince the benighted monarch, Fath Ali Shah (1762-1834), to accept their respective governments' assistance in resisting further Russian incursions — assistance that would be given, of course, in exchange for advancing their own colonial and imperial designs in the region. (Dabashi, 2007, p.32)

During the reign of Fath Ali Shah, Russian invasions, which lasted for two decades, were concluded with one more treaty, the Turkamanchai Treaty (1828), which required surrendering more areas of the northern provinces to Russians.

> Similarly, the British, eager to counterbalance Russian successes and to use Afghanistan as a buffer zone both against the tsars and against the Qajars, invaded southern Iran and extracted from the shah the Treaty of Paris (1857). As a result of these treaties, the Qajars regained Tabriz and southern Iran, and obtained international recognition as legitimate rulers of Iran; but lost Georgia, Armenia, and their Caspian navy, gave up all claims to Afghanistan, paid an indemnity of £3,000,000 to the tsar, and, most significant of all, granted a series of commercial capitulations to Russia and Britain. These capitulations enabled the two powers to open consular and commercial offices anywhere they wished, and exempted their merchants not only from the high import duties but also from internal tariffs, local travel restrictions, and the jurisdiction of shari'a law courts. (Abrahamian, 1983, p. 51)

In fact, the political culture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was shaped by the continual crises, as mentioned above. Although Iran was never officially colonialized, meaning it was always ruled by an Iranian monarch, these

diplomatic treaties initiated, as they were intended to, the economic penetration of Iran. The Russians, British and French took advantage of the impotent monarchs who struggled to stabilize the country and establish their central power under the threats from other local tribes that were economically autonomous. For two centuries, these three colonial powers maintained their political and economic interference and, more importantly, exploited natural resources (especially British control over Iranian petroleum). During the nineteenth century, the total volume of foreign trade increased, in real terms, by as much as eight times (Issawi, 1971, pp.131-150). In return, many from the ruling class and nobility travelled to England to master the medical sciences, military strategies and other academic subjects. “[T]hey [Qajars] tried to initiate two ambitious programs for rapid, defensive, and statewide modernization” (Abrahamian, 1983, p. 52).

The emergence of photography in Persia was followed shortly by other technological developments such as the train systems and the formation of the first formal education system.

> Photography was a major carrier and shaper of modernism. Not only did it *dislocate* time and space, but it also undermined the linear structure of conventional narrative in a number of respects. These included access to visual information […]. (Wells, 2004, p.19)

As Wells (2004) notes, the birth of photography enabled the public to engage in the discourse of political power. However, unlike its global trend, during the Naser al-Din Shah’s period, modernization was a vehicle to impose the state’s narrative on the public. The delivery of the first camera to the hands of the Shah in Iran allowed him to exercise his power through this new medium. Like the transformation of socio-political power and significant developments in an effort to modernize the country (Bill, 1970), the knowledge of the photographic process was introduced from above. One of the most important events, which extensively promoted photography among the elites, was the formation of the training institution *Dar ul-Funun* (Abode of Science). Prior to this, the use of camera was exclusively reserved for the royal court and mainly the Shah himself. *Dar ul-*

Funun was founded by Naser al-Din Shah's Prime Minister, Amir Kabir (1807-1852), the prolific modernizer of the Naseri time.

Although the Shah appointed Prime Minister in 1848, Amir Kabir was recognized as a leading nationalist and reformer during the Naseri time at the beginning of his reign (Molavi, 2005, pp.195-7). By the late 1850s, Amir Kabir, the Prime Minister, officially began the construction of *Dar ul-Funun*, the first polytechnic — modelled after Western-style universities — focusing on a wide range of scientific programs. Establishing *Dar ul-Funun* was a major reform imposed by the royal court in favor of the elites. The school played a central role in the training of Iranian photographers mainly selected from the royal and ruling classes. As Tahmasbpour (2002) writes, *Dar ul-Funun's* proximity to the Palace was neither a coincidence nor because of a lack of lands. The photography department of *Dar ul-Funun* and the Royal Atelier were interconnected and regulated by royal decrees (Tahmasbpour, 2002, p.139). Even the land along the eastern wall of Golestan Palace was a royal donation for the school's construction: "[T]wo studios overlapped in responsibilities and carrying out royal orders for photographic documentation" (Nabipour and Sheikh in Ritter, 2018, p.293).

Dar ul-Funun has been identified as the first place in Iran's history where upper-class youths associated with the royal family and elites could get trained by European instructors and diplomats, like Richard Khan (Nasiri, 2010). Consequently, a substantial number of Qajar princes, and the Shah's servants received their first formal training in photography from Europeans who were invited to build Iran's education system, which was modeled after European institutions. Reportedly, these amateur photographers trained at *Dar ul-Funun*, and *Akkaskhaneh-ye mobarakeh-ye Homayouni* (Royal photography Atelier) contributed many photographs — most of which are unknown — to *Albumkhaneh* (House of Album), the archive in the Golestan Palace. According to Tahmasbpour (2002), the large body of unknown photographs in the Golestan archive is associated with *Dar ul-Funun's* practice sessions.

Besides an increase in the number of the prince photographers during the Naseri period, the first book about technical aspects of photography — named *Photograph Book* (n.d.) — was written by Mohammad Kazem Ibn Ahmad Mahalati under the Shah's order (Tahmasbpour, 2013, p. 50). Despite the organized effort for formal training, the history of the first Iranian photographer is vague and unclear. This is arguably due to Naser al-Din Shah's order to abolish *Dar ul-Funun* in 1929, and followed by the further destruction of the archive by the Islamists ideology, which aimed to erase any sign of monarchs, including photographic proofs, during and after the Islamic revolution of 1979 (Helbig, 2018, p.94). However, it is clear that during the Naseri time, the knowledge of making images was made available to members of the ruling class,and its history in Iran was recorded by the court members close to the Shah. The exclusive use of the camera by the Shah and his court enabled him to dominate the knowledge production through the image-making process. As Helbig (2018) explains:

> In this vein, [through photography] facts are gathered and classified in pursuit of comprehensive knowledge or in the conduct of imperial administration. In spite of the different context, photography thus opened new paths in Iran for collecting and controlling knowledge. This becomes apparent in considering the construction of the Royal Photography Library and the extensive photographic expeditions undertaken. (p.93)

The formation of the Royal photography institutions and the photography archive enabled the Shah to control what could be seen; in addition to how the country should be viewed beyond the walls of the Palace? The Shah maintained his domination over the production of visual knowledge production for the most part of the nineteenth century. However, by roughly the 1870s, the Iranian women and the members of the public could for the first time practice photography for the first time. As a result of this expansion, the subjects of photography were diversified.

At the time, importing technological developments by the royal court was perceived as a sign of "Westernization" imposed by the ruling class, including the royal family and elites. It was heavily denounced by the Islamic religious leaders,

and merchants. Even though Iranian modernization was first promoted by the Shah and helped further perpetuate the existing socio-political status quo, soon Western modes of thoughts permeated the country's pre-existing socio-political boundaries. It noticeably spread to the everyday life of commoners. Although Iran was never officially colonized (as discussed above), "Iranians became colonized and exposed to European modernity at one and the same time; thus, they can be modern only in a colonial sense" (Dabashi, 2007, p.27). For this reason, Iranian modernization, also known as Westernization or as Abrahamian (1983) articulates, "contact with the West" led to protests starting in the nineteenth century:

> Contact with the West, besides developing the modern intelligentsia and the traditional middle class, also created widespread social discontent. The intelligentsia, anxious for rapid progress, expressed increasing dissatisfaction with the slow pace of modernization and the high degree of court corruption. (p.69)

Mozaffari (2014) discusses the signs of modernization in Persia starting in the Qajar dynasty — reaching its climax during the Pahlavi dynasty — and how they mark significant ideological shifts as follows:

> Ostensibly, the country had exhibited signs of modernization and progress and was rapidly Westernizing. The political system, although autocratic, appeared to be secular by contemporary standards. There were signs of social transformation in people's appearances (costumes, speech, material possessions, and lifestyles) and in the social structure: certain classes had transformed in accordance with new modes of industry, commerce, and economy inspired by contemporary Western modes of thoughts, and promoted by the government. […] Official, cultural and economic policies were heavily slanted toward a combination of nationalism and Westernization, and […] much to dismay of the traditionally oriented sectors of the society such as a considerable proportion of bazaar merchants. (p.11)

Mozaffari (2014) addresses the rapid growth of "Westernization in cultural" and economic sectors as the main factors that agitated the traditional sectors of Iran. In his statement, he not only emphasizes the apparent distinction between

“tradition” and “Westernization” but also names the signs of the emergence of modernity in Iran as “Westernization.” Embracing modernity was not limited to the Naseri period or the time of his successor in the Qajar dynasty. The aim to further modernizing the country was maintained by the next dynasty and intensified after the rise of the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979).

Dabashi (2007) rejects the binary between “tradition” and “modernity” in the case of modernization in Iran because it fails to recognize the European colonial domination of the country that was unlike modernity stemming from European Enlightenment. Instead, he offers the concept of “colonial modernity” that highlights the arrival of colonial powers in Persia under the name of modernization:

> European modernity is not universal, and as we [Iranians] received it, it is categorically European in its texture and disposition, and as such it has privileged a few by giving them agency and endowing them with the primacy of reason and progress, at the horrendous cost of denying such prerogatives to the overwhelming majority of the world’s population. *Colonial Modernity,* as I understand and propose it here, namely a kind of modernity that brings European reason and progress to the world but delivers them through the gun barrel of European colonial officers, has in the course of colonial history generated its dialectical opposite, namely the epistemic and practical domains of an *anticolonial modernity* — the terms of which are not borrowed from Europe but in fact are articulated on the battlefield of opposing the effective consequence of European modernity, namely colonialism. (p.251)

His remark refers to the European system of knowledge production, which enforces the binaries between “modernity” and “tradition”, the “civilized” and “savage” people, the “Occident” and the “Orient”. This binarism, which constructs the world through European discourses, operates as “a non-coercive power” (Foucault, 1980) constituted through the scientific understanding of phenomena. In Foucault’s book *Power/Knowledge* (1980), his analysis of power is concerned with the use of European typology as models that the rest of the world must follow.

> Power in the substantive sense, 'le' pouvoir, doesn't exist. What I mean is this. The idea that there is either located at — or emanating from — a given point something which is a 'power' seems to me be based on a misguided analysis, one which at all events fails to account for a considerable number of phenomena. In reality power means relations, a more-or-less hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations. (Foucault,1980, p.198)

Based on the Foucauldian concept of power, the ideology of colonialism reaches the Orient through a set of practices and relationships. Whether the European photographers in *Looking at Persepolis* were commissioned for a photography expedition by the Shah, or they just obtained access to the site for expeditions, their images of Persepolis represent a European ethnographical gaze that mystifies the Orient. In particular, the absence of a sense of time and the local people in these photographs bring the Oriental world into being by signifying the historical landscape that is available to be occupied. Therefore, as a part of the strategy of Oriental photographers, the images of columns, cubical buildings and flat inscriptions on the walls convince their viewers that the photographs are simply "a reflection" or "scientific in their exactitude" (Nochlin, 1989, p.37) of a pre-existing reality of the Orient. In Chapter 3, I elaborate further on the hierarchical relation of the early photographic practices in Iran, which is followed by a close examination of specific European photographers in Chapter 4.

2.3. The Sociopolitical Discourse of Persia: The Dusk of Qajar Dynasty

As explained above, the late nineteenth century was a significant turning point in the status of the ruling class (including the royal family and the elites) in Persia, which accelerated drastic changes in the imperial regime of Persia.

> The traditional middle class, left defenseless against foreign competitors, gradually realized that the Qajars were interested more in strengthening the state against society than in protecting the

> society against the imperial powers. […] There is also little statistical evidence on the intensity of social discontent, but there is enough documentary material to indicate that during the second half of the century the population, especially the urban population, increased its hostility toward the West, the Qajars, and the communities closely associated with the West. (Abrahamian, 1983, pp.69-71)

As the stimulating nationalistic feelings were on the rise, the middle and working classes, the Bazaar (merchant) classes, the religious leaders, and the intellectuals joined hands to resist granting concessions and permissions to foreign powers (Jabbari and Oslon, 1981). During this time, the assassination of Naser al-Din Shah in 1896 put an end to almost sixty years of his reign and his beloved systematic photography projects.

The coronation of Muzaffar al-Din Shah, in 1896, amid a financial crisis, did not extricate Persia from its previous debt to England and Russia. Despite the new Shah's interests in photography, he had to abandon the revival of photography expeditions after Naser al-Din Shah since the earlier loans from foreign powers had impaired the country's economy and resulted in granting numerous concessions to European colonialists (Cleveland, 2013). The nationalists' movements and widespread riots led to major changes and the adoption of Iran's constitutional system, also known as the Constitutional Revolution of Persia. for the first time during the dynastic history of Persia and as a result of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, a parliament (Majlis in the Persian language) was established to make a foundational revision to control the economy and the oil products as well as preserving the cultural heritage (Iranica Vol vi, 1992, pp.163-216; Abdi, 2001, pp.50- 2). The Constitutional system replaced the obsolete institutions with new social and political systems. These systems contributed to the growth of civil society and promoted new ideas such as "[…] an awareness of Iran's cultural heritage and economic resources, and stimulated nationalist sentiments concerning the country's historical heritage" (Abdi, 2001; also see in Mousavi, 2012). Given the rise of nationalism and the political climate of the early twentieth century, it is not surprising that granting

archeological freedom and indefinite access to the national heritages like the Délégation en Perse (the right of unlimited excavation in Persia given to the French government) under the Qajars agitated the public and the intellectuals. The French monopoly over the Persian archeological lands was a matter of smuggling the cultural artifacts and also negatively affected the public's sense of national pride.

The long history of foreign domination and interference within national affairs drained resources for Muzaffar al-Din Shah. It subsequently made the next Shah after Naser al-Din Shah the last monarch of the Qajar dynasty who was not forced to leave the country. He lived in Persia until the end of his life. The next two Shahs (Mohammad Ali Shah and Ahmad Shah) of the Qajar had to flee the country. The next in the line Mohammad Ali Shah (1872-1925), the successor of Muzaffar al-Din Shah, only held the reign for two chaotic years. By 1906, the historical alliance between the middle class, merchants and religious leaders led to the formation of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. Mohammad Ali Shah's opposition to the constitutional system led to the decision to invade the first Persian parliament (1908) with the military and the political support of Russia and Britain (Tafreshi, 2010). This miscalculated move resulted in an immense backlash against the royal court. In response to this tragic event, the public and the opposition formed a coalition and revived the parliament. Opposition forces and widespread protest for restoring the 1906 Persian Constitution narrowed down the Shah's choices. He abandoned the country and left everything to his young son, the next Shah. In this context, "[i]n 1910, San'i al-Molk, the Minister of Culture, took the initiative to create the first antiquities service, the direction which was entrusted to Iraj Mirza, a famous poet and a liberal cultural personality of his time" (Afshar and Mousavi, 1976, p.40).

While Persia was getting ready for drastic changes, a series of major political events led to the political coup of Reza Khan in February of 1921 (the coup of d'état), which eventually ended the Qajar dynasty. Reza Khan, an officer in the Persian Cossack Brigade and then the Prime Minister, established a new era during the reign of young Ahmad Shah and soon founded a new dynastic

power in 1925. He took advantage of the nationalist sentiments of the public during the rise of nationalism to legitimize the overthrowing of the last Shah of Qajar. Subsequently, he swiftly invented a new dynastic name, Pahlavi, and issued a royal decree to change the name of Persia to Iran (Ansari, 2003). The strategic change of his last name to Pahlavi was another attempt to introduce the new dynasty as a long-lasting successor of the Persian Empire by distancing themselves from the previous modes of authentication established by the Qajar dynasty (Mozaffari, 2014, p.41). The Qajar's reference to the glorious past, in particular the subscription to the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736), "was understood mainly in terms of the country's territorial expanse and integrity, and to unify its people under the aegis of Shi´aism" (Mozaffari, 2014, p.23).

In contrast, Reza Shah Pahlavi utilized the name of the country to make another reference to the ancient past since "Iran" derived from Sassanian language, is rooted in the term Arya "which presumably means the place of birth of Aryan race" (Asgharzadeh, 2007; Dashti, 2012). It is unmistakable that Reza Shah was persuaded by his desire for re-branding the nation through new national rituals that went beyond a simple change in political rhetoric. The next Shah, Mohammad Reza Shah, continued this project, and linking Pahlavi to Achaemenid led him to initiate a series of national celebrations at the site of Persepolis. As Vuurman writes,

> In the fall of 16 October 1971, the world's attention was turned over to Persepolis for a few days. Elites, presidents, heads of the government, and many other high-ranking guests travelled from twelve countries to the Achaemenid Palace complex (Persepolis near Shiraz) to be the guest of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941-1979) in the celebration of the 2500-year anniversary of the Persian monarchy. [Besides promoting a grandiose Iranian history and culture,] the purpose of the festivities was to highlight the Shah's dynasty and the modern economic achievements acquired during his reign. The Shah of the Shahs had spared no effort to make the feast in Persepolis resemble to what an Achaemenid King would have been worthy of. In particular, Cyrus[13] the Great (558-530 BCE), the

[13] The emphasis on Cyrus is not only to glorify the founder of Achaemenid dynasty, but also alludes to legacy of Cyrus as it was carved on a cylindrical clay object. The Cyrus cylinder speaks in

> founder of the Achaemenid Empire, was honored during the festivities[14]. (2015, p.11)

Since there were many requests — made by nationalists — for the preservation of national heritage, the celebrations at the capital of the Achaemenid Empire, Persepolis was both the response of Mohammad Reza Shah to the nationalists and his desire to link the Pahlavi dynasty to the Persian Empire. Mohammad Reza Shah believed such royal identification — as the legitimate predecessor of the Persian Empire — can unify the country's political actors and lead to the long-term political stability.

2.4. Early European Travelers: Guides for Future Photography Expeditions

Examining power relations, particularly European imperialism in Persia, is an integral part of the discussion about early photography in Iran. The fascination of European photographers with the Achaemenid sites goes beyond the invention of the daguerreotype. In fact, it is traced back to the earliest visit to Persepolis in the fourteenth century. By the early sixteenth century, there was a surge in the number of writings about and drawings of Achaemenid's inscriptions, buildings and architectural elements produced in the European travel journals (Vuurman, 2015). Historians suggest that between 1571 and 1629, Shah Abbas, the King of Iran, established political and economic relations with the West, which attracted European travelers (Sheffer, 1952, pp.60-61; Akbari, 2007, pp.98-100). The travel journals produced by these travelers are

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Akkadian of ideal rulership, human rights, and freedom of religion, became the symbol of par-excellence. The Cyrus Cylinder (6th century BCE) contains a cuneiform text describing Cyrus as a King who set the Babylonian people free from their oppressor, King Nabonidus, brought peace and tranquility, worshiped the Babylonian gods, restored the temples, and welcomed them back from exile to their homeland. The cylinder was discovered in Babylon in 1879 by the archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam and is today in the British Museum. In 1971, the cylinder was presented as a "Universal Declaration of Human Rights". Even today, the cylinder is important for the debate on freedom of religion and peace in the Middle East.

[14] The translation from Dutch to English is made possible by my family member, who speaks Dutch

useful in understanding the objectives and goals of their visits. As was mentioned in the introduction, perhaps the most recent comprehensive study of the journals left by the early European travelers was conducted by Vuurman (2015). Her detailed study of the journals from European travelers reveals that prior to the invention of the daguerreotype, it was common for the travelers to draw or sketch the ancient sites during their visits to Iran. They often captured the architecture and complex artifacts at ancient sites along with the reports about their fascination with the ruins of the ancient sites. She argues this primary form of documentation became the source of later European travelers and, specifically, archaeologists. In the following pages, I argue early photography in Iran is not a new project, but in fact, it is just a continuation of Western domination over the Near East under the overarching ideas of modernity.

Like the previous studies, Vuurman's (2015) concludes that remains of ancient civilizations were sources of fascination for European travelers. Weld-Blundell (1893) writes that description of the site by Thomas Herbert, the English traveler and historian (1606-1682) in his journal, points to what appeared to him as golden patterns — in the remaining architectural elements at Persepolis (p.557). Similar observations were made by later travelers, who reported the use of metal and gold on the embellishments of the inscriptions at Persepolis. The notes acquired from the following travelers include the detailed elaborations and the location of the precious Achaemenid stone reliefs, sculptures and potentially valuable metals: Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716), a German explorer and physician, who visited Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rustam in December of 1685, Andre Daulier-Deslasndes (1654-1719) and Jean Chardin (1643-1713) (Nagel, 2013, pp.597-598). But the interest of European travelers in Persia went beyond just collecting valuable artifacts and materials. Ali Mousavi (2012) argues that European travelers did not only arrive in Persia because of the monetary value of the ancient artifacts. His work examines the cultural aspects of European fascination by making a connection between the colonial powers and the need for collecting ancient artifacts to support their

knowledge production about the Orient. In the article, “Persepolis in Retrospect: History of discovery and Archeological Exploration at the Ruins of Ancient Parseh,” Mousavi (2002) writes that the main reason for the rush of European travelers, diplomats, and archeologists to the heartland of Persia and Susa, also known as Shusha (the administrative capital of the Achaemenid Kings, Darius I and his successors from 522 BCE), was “the creation of national museums in Europe from the second half of the eighteenth century, and therefore increased demand for objects” (p.216).

The later notes documented by the European travelers in the nineteenth century demonstrate that they were often guided by the travel journals written as early as the seventeenth century. One of the most controversial documents from the nineteenth century was written by James Morier, the British diplomat and traveler. He published the details of his journey in his book titled: *A Journey through Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor* (1812) and *A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor* (1818), in which he names Chardin (1735) and Cornelius Le Bruyn (1737) as his initial sources of information prior to his visit. The most controversial aspect of these journals is the overt description of smuggling ancient artifacts. In his second travel journal, Morier (1818) provides a detailed account of breaking Achaemenid’s sculptural figures and smuggling artifacts:

> I went early in the morning to the ruins, which were situated about a mile from my habitation, attended by the stone-cutters. Considering the quantity of sculpture remains that had fallen from their original positions, and which were spread about the ruins in great profusion, I did not hesitate to appropriate such parts of them as seemed the most fitting to be sent to England […] (p.75).

He then describes how badly he wanted to send two large statues by the bottom of a staircase leading to the entrance of one of the buildings to Britain, but he had to cut them to facilitate their transportation. He continues by blaming incompetent Persian stone-cutters for dissecting rough pieces. Morier’s souvenirs from his trips to Persia were found in the British Museum years later except for two figures. Gore Ouseley (1770-1884), a British diplomat, used

these two figures to decorate the staircase in his London house. Records show these pieces were not the only ancient artifacts owned by Ouseley. These figures joined Ouseley's large collection of the rock reliefs from Persepolis (Curtis 1998, p.48). It is apparent that these statues were exchanged a few times before landing in the British Museum (Curtis,1998, p. 50; Adle, 2000).

Chahryar Adle (2000), an Iranian historian and archeologist, criticizes European travelers during the sixteenth century for the mass destruction of the site and smuggling artifacts. According to Adle, James Morier (1780-1849) performed operations to remove portable architectural elements. In criticisms of Morier's practices, Adle writes:

> He [Morier] did not ask himself whether or not, under the ethical or legal standards prevailing at the time in Persia, or even in England, the unauthorized removal of a work of art would deserve reprehension. Nor did he realize that he had at least made an error of management by entrusting the task to Persians, whom he considered devoid of any skill or quality and corrupt. (quoted in Mousavi, 2012, pp.126-127)

As Adle points out, Europeans justified their reckless actions and destructive operations at the ancient sites by portraying the Persians as incompetent people who could not understand the value of the prehistoric monuments. This attitude or sense of entitlement is what Said (1979) considers as the distinction between "Orient" and "Occident," which reinforces "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (p.7). There are still many unknowns about the history of the Achaemenid as ancestors of Persians mainly due to the absence of a systematic study about Persepolis, the continuation of the illegal operations and smuggling artifacts until the twentieth century. As Mozaffari (2014) argues, Persepolis as a symbolic site connotes the narrative of Iranian identity (pp.6-10). Yet, there are still many unanswered questions about the language, culture, religion, administrative hierarchy and scientific developments of the Persian Empire, all of which can only be answered by the close study of archeological structures. However, Europeans who visited Persia during the eighteenth to twentieth century and dug

for artifacts have left few reports about their archeological explorations. It was not until 1930 that the antiquities law was passed in Iran's parliament, ending the smuggling of artifacts.

Even those who recorded their observations and operations left documents filled with biased ideas and negative images of the country, which "presents the melancholy spectacle" with the nation of primitive Persians who did not understand the significance of the "natural gift" (Morier, 1818, p.83). Despite the admiration of the ancient monuments, Europeans did not respect Iranian sovereignty or the local people. Morier's second journal is textual evidence of this attitude towards the Near East. In the preface of his journal, he claims the Near East is just as the Bible described it. The parts of the journal, indeed, most carefully preserved are

> some remarks on these subjects [Persians]: for the manners of the East, amidst all changes of Government and of Religion, are still the same: they are living impression from an original mold; and at every step some object, some idioms, some dress, or some custom of common life reminds the travelers of ancient times, and confirms, above all, the beauty, the accuracy, and the propriety of the language and the history of the Bible (1818, p.viiii).

He goes on by describing the crude scenery and unexplored nature that is unaltered since its creation.

> The passages over such mountains must ever be of high interest to the traveler, as they afford him great opportunities of observing portions of the earth which, except the beaten path over which he walks, must, from their nature, have been in their present state since the creation. In their recesses he may observe, from the extraordinary of their stratification, sometimes horizontal, at others angular, and sometimes again nearly perpendicular, what have been the operations of nature on the grandest scale. (ibid, p.49)

Morier's remarks point to the pre-existing biases that categorically consider Persians as primitive, uncivilized people who do not know how to use their natural resources. As mentioned above, though Morier believed they (Persians) still live like the ancient times, they are not worthy of keeping the ancient treasures and artifacts.

2.5. The Early Archeological Scene in Iran

Every year around spring, when Iranians celebrate the arrival of the Persian new year, the discussion about the ceremonial rituals of the new year urges the Iranian media in the country to evaluate the contemporary knowledge about their Persian roots by reviewing the historical significance of Persepolis. During this time, talking and writing about the first archeological and photographic expeditions of Persepolis as the most genuine evidence of the ancient civilization is the common theme in Iranian media. The most recent publications by official Iranian news organizations (published in Iran) aim to raise awareness about Persepolis as a national heritage site that can be traced back to the earliest archeological operations by Ernest Herzfeld (1879-1948), though they avoid discussing the instances of smuggling of artifacts before and during the Herzfeld's time[15] (See *Tansim News*, 2018; *Ettelaat News*, 2019). Recent celebratory news articles on Persepolis did not only call Herzfeld the first archaeologist to excavate the site of Persepolis in 1930 but also glorified him. They claimed that Herzfeld's bold moves to abolish the French monopoly over Iran's archeological sites were intended to regulate archeological expeditions in Iran rather than a calculated step for his gains (Archeology Society of Iran, 2018). Chapter 4 will provide a detailed discussion about his identity and ideological approach, which directly influenced photographs taken by Hans Wichart von Busse, the German photographer who assisted Herzfeld in Persepolis.

I rely on the definition of Orientalism by Edward Said (1978); "as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid or filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness […]" (p.6). Thus, I argue that detecting the ideological underpinnings of the early European travelers is important to understand how it is intertwined with the system of knowledge production about the East both outside and within Iran. The early Orientalists provide a complex system of ideas and knowledge about the key moments of historical narratives of

[15] My translation from Persian text.

Persia, including the migration of Assyrians, and the racial theory of Aryans as the superior race, which will be examined in Chapter 4.

Before French expeditions and Herzfeld's project, the landscapes with the main heritage sites in contemporary Iran — known as Persia at the time — were British archeological sites. Mousavi reports (2002; 2005) that the first archeological research conducted by Iranians was around the late nineteenth century. As colonial powers competed over Iran's archeological sites, locals and the Persian government abandoned Persepolis and left it to erode. They were not aware of Achaemenid's rich history and the significance of Persepolis.

Between 1845 and 1850, W. K. Loftus, the British explorer and archaeological excavator and geologist, carried out projects funded by the British Museum in the Western region of Iran at Susa. Although he was unsuccessful in finding any valuable objects, such as metal and golden artifacts, his project resulted in the first floor plan of the site (Loftus, 1857, pp.418-22). Roughly thirty years later, in the 1880s, the French amateur archaeologist Marcel-Auguste Dieulafoy (1844-1920) recovered the British excavation at Susa using Loftus's floor plan. According to the statement by the guest curator regarding *Looking at Persepolis*, Dieulafoy was also known for his photographs of Persepolis (Habibullah, Fields Notes, Dec. 15, 2018).

During the rise of Iranian nationalism, the debates about preserving artifacts and the proposal to build an Iranian National Museum were first brought forward in 1897. Although nationalists could not establish any concrete action, they sparked the formation of pro-democracy political organizations. In 1922, the Society for National Heritage (Anjoman-e Asar-e Meli) of Iran, founded by nationalists, became the major force that opposed the ongoing Western domination and control of Iran's heritage sites and natural resources, including petroleum. Despite the public outcry, until the coronation of Reza Shah in 1926, Persepolis was often used as a battlefield where the local tribes of Fars confronted governmental forces. By 1930 Herzfeld, the German archeologist who pioneered the study in the other Achaemenid capital of Pasargadae, presented his findings that showed "the ancient cultural foundations that supported modern

Iranian nationalism" (Jenkins, 2012, p.14). His early studies shed light on the nature of kingship, the structure of perhaps the first ancient government in the Iranian plateau and the intertwined question of religion (Zoroastrianism) and politics (ibid).

In the contemporary body of literature on Persia, there is no agreement about the archeological periods of Iran. On the one hand, Ali Mousavi (1994), quoted in *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran*, identified five principal periods for the early archeological expeditions in Iran:

> The period of early exploration (1600-1800), the nineteenth century, and emerging archeology; the period of the French excavation at Susa (1884- 1927); 1931 to 1979; and the period from the Islamic revolution of 1979 to the present. (p.10)

On the other hand, a great number of archeological studies that claim the contemporary history of Iranian archeology should be categorized as before and after World War II (Young, 1986, p.281; S. M. Shahmirzadi,1987; Stronach, 1999). This division suggests that the invasion of Iran during WWII by Britain and the Soviet Union was a turning point in the history of archeological projects and the preservation of archeological sites. The decade-long tie with Germans and Reza Shah's interest in fascist ideology was enough to make Allies anxious about Iran's position in international politics. Consequently, it resulted in the invasion of Iran by Russians in the Northern Part of Iran. British forces subsequently took over the southern part of the country.

Despite the disagreement over the periods of archeological studies, as mentioned above, it is clear European expeditions never produced a comprehensive report to inform the Shah or the officials about their projects in Iran's heritage sites. Moreover, shifts in the central regime or sociopolitical changes greatly affected archeological projects or, in some cases, halted activities (Mozaffari, 2014, Potts, 2013; Mousavi, 2012; Jenkis, 2011). The next chapter will explain how discourses about early photography in Iran intersect with the discourses about Iranian identity. I will elaborate on the significance of Persepolis in relation to the national narrative of Iranian identity and how the

current national identity of Iranians, as a nation, was interrupted by the Islamic revolution of 1979.

Chapter 3. Genealogy of Photography in Iran

3.1. Western Apparatus in Persia

Since Europeans took almost all the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis*, this study's analysis of the exhibition needs to take into consideration the intersection of the colonial projects and Iranian nationalism. In this chapter, I continue to contextualize the photographs' production in *Looking at Persepolis* focusing on the macro-level and discussing the emergence of photography in Iran. To shed light on the intersection of photography and the discourse of Persian identity, I first provide a more detailed discussion about the arrival of photography in Iran and the role of Europeans in building the country's infrastructure and educational system. Then, I briefly address the invention of the first photographic process by Europeans. I do this to discuss how it enabled them to control the export of the new technology, which was first delivered to the Iranian monarch only a few years after 1839, when it was made publicly available in Europe (Adel, 1989, p.261; Tahmasbpour, 2013, p.11). I then discuss the contradictory nature of accounts of the history of photography in Iran, investigating the role of European and Iranian photographers in producing pictorial knowledge about ancient Persia through their records of the country's monumental sites. Subsequently, I examine why Europeans, including scholars and diplomats, were fascinated with Persepolis. The second half of this chapter draws attention to the implications of modernization in Iran. Finally, I problematize the impact of the glorification of the Persian Empire before and after the Islamic revolution of 1979. I point to the role of Persepolis in the construction of Persian identity and the significance of photography in the construction of Iranian national identity.

As explained in the introduction, most of the photographers in *Looking at Persepolis* were Europeans, and many of them were commissioned by different Iranian Shahs — in particular during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah — to produce photographs for the royal collection at the Golestan Palace photography archive.

After the formation of the Royal Atelier in 1859, the first European photographers in Iran became the first photography instructors of the Shah and his trusted court members. Their lessons are evident in the photographic practices of the court photographers, who greatly contributed to the royal collection.

Though the photo-historians recognize Jules Richard (1815-1891) as the first photographer in Iran, due to the loss of Richard's daguerreotypes, there is uncertainty about the date of his arrival, and therefore which Shah commissioned him to take the first photographs in Persia. Yaha Zoka (1997), the well-known Iranian historian of early photography, acknowledges that Richard, a French photographer, was the first photographer to arrive in Persia. He questions previous studies that dated Richard's photographic practices back to 1848, during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah (Tahmasbpour, 2002, p.32). Instead, Zoka writes that Richard introduced the first photographic process to Mohammad Shah Qajar (who ruled Persia between 1805 and 1848) in 1844 (ibid). Since Richard's early photographic images of Persia are not available, Zoka (1997) refers to the written documents and royal notes. In 1983, the Iranian scholars Iraj Afshar, Yahya Zoka and Chahryar Adel (1989) obtained evidence that links Richard's photographic practices to the royal court of Mohammad Shah, while the young Naser al-Din Shah was still the Crown Prince. The secondary document discovered by these three Iranian scholars consists of a note written by the prolific royal painter Kamal ol-Molk (1847-1940) on the back of one of his paintings. This rare evidence hidden under the frame of the Naser al-Din Shah's portrait proves that Richard captured the first portrait of the Shah before his reign, when he was Crown Prince. After the Islamic revolution of 1979, the painting was removed from the display at Golestan Palace. For the first time, historians noticed the handwritten note in which Kamal ol-Molk mentioned the use of Richard's daguerreotype as his reference for the royal portraits that he painted in 1881. According to Adel, the artist's note reads as follows:

> Similar to the portrait of the Great King (Homayouni) taken by Monsieur French Richard with daguerreotype while he was the fifteen year-old Crown Prince in Tehran 1844 (quoted in Studia Iranica, 1989, p.261).

According to Kamal ol-Molk's note, Richard was an influential photographer in the court four years prior to the coronation of Naser al-Din Shah. Based on this new evidence and the previous studies, it is undeniable that Richard started photography in Iran before other European photographers, and four years earlier than it was dated previously.

Despite the disagreement about the details of Iran's first daguerreotype, photo historians agree that Richard was a Frenchman funded by the Shah to operate the first daguerreotype camera. As Sheikh (2015) notes, he cannot be called a photographer just because he was the first person to merely make sense of the instructions for the camera. Sheikh's remark underscores Richard's lack of photography skills. In fact, he was an amateur photographer associated with diplomatic missions rather than a skilled photographer (Diba, 2013, p.87). He later taught photography to the first Iranian photographer, young Crown Prince Naser al-Din Mirza. As Richard paved his way to the court, he converted to Islam and received the royal title of "Richard Khan."[16] By the first half of 1850, Richard became the first court photographer dispatched to Persepolis to photograph its reliefs and inscriptions. His mission was unsuccessful due to the government's financial challenges (Zoka, 1983; Mousavi, 2002; Tahmasbpour, 2013; Ritter and Scheiwiller, 2017).

It is essential to mention that when Richard entered Mohammad Shah's court as a diplomat and later as the only person who could operate the camera; the French archeological expeditions dominated the archeological landscape of Persia and focused on the antiquity period (Chevalier, 2002, pp. 512-516). Around the same time, the British Geologist W. K. Loftus, who conducted archeological research in Susa, found invaluable ancient artifacts in 1847 (Potts, 2013). In the absence of any concrete regulations for excavating Persian heritage sites or protecting against smuggling, it is unclear what type of artifacts the

[16] Khan was the royal title in Qajar dynasty showing the high respect of the Shah for that person. In terms of its literal meaning, it is translated to lord or gentleman. This title designated particular rights and honorary Iranian nationality.

French studied and where the artifacts they found were sent. But it is evident that in 1844 “Rene de Balloy,” minister of France in Tehran, obtained the approval of a treaty granting France exclusive rights to excavate in Persia. As Chevalier (2002) mentions, “[f]ive years later, with the creation of Délégation en Perse, the French obtained a total concession for all archeological excavations in Iran for an indefinite period.” This marked the beginning of the long period of French archeological monopoly in Persia (quoted in Mousavi, 2012, p.357; also see Nasiri-Moghaddam, 2004, pp.347-9, 357-62). At this time, Susa was the focal point of French archeological projects (Perrot, 1997, p.183). The main objective of the French archeologists was to find the celebrated painted pottery vessels of the fifth millennium previously discovered in Susa. Therefore, they undervalued Persepolis (ibid).

3.2. Orientalist Lens

There are different arguments regarding the chronology of the first photographs produced in Persia. Photo-historians unanimously agree that the first daguerreotypes were gifted to the Mohammad Shah by Queen Victoria of Britain and Tsar Nicholas I of Russia (Mousavi, 2002, p.12; Diba, 2013, p.87; Ritter and Scheiwiller, 2017. P.15; Roxburgh and McWilliams, 2017, p.82). The three European powers that actively participated in the production of the first photographic representations of Iran were France, Soviet Union and Britain (Adel, 1989; Zoka, 1997; Tahmasbpour, 2013, pp.188-192). While all three countries were fascinated with the remains of the ancient Empire, their involvement was not limited to the photography and archeological expeditions but also included political and economic interference (as mentioned in Chapter 2). The first introduction of the photographic process by Richard during the Qajar dynasty is a symbolic reminder of European political and economic domination in Iran. As Wells (2004) writes:

> […] photography claimed to be able to create objective, scientific, records that were free from the bias of human imagination. Carefully

> contrived and constructed photographs were consumed as though they were unmediated and offered a neutral reflection of the world. […]. What were returned to the Western spectator were images of native peoples that established them as primitive, bizarre, barbaric or simply picturesque. (p.83)

The advent of image-making in the nineteenth century introduced a new means of collecting and classifying the visual form of knowledge, which communicate the superiority of Europeans against the rest of the world. In this sense, the production of visual knowledge first began within the walls of the Golestan Palace by a Frenchman.

Studying of European photographs showcased in *Looking at Persepolis* challenged my desire to analyze the "Oriental" lens. The rigid historical architecture with its sharp shadows was unlike what I already knew about the presentation of "Otherness" in the discourse of photography. Upon my arrival to The Polygon Gallery, I found the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* very alienating mainly due to the absence of human bodies, which contrasted with the crowded site that I visited. This was because the common theme of the exhibition was an Orientalist iconography. The exclusion of people in the most of the photographs was an obstacle, preventing an engagement with the great body of work that examines the "Orientalism". At the beginning of my research, I was perplexed as to how to address my feelings; finally, I drew a link between the common practices used by Orientalists during the same period in Iran, Egypt and Turkey (the Ottoman Empire). The four main signs of Otherness in European photographic practices that helped me identify Orientalism in the exhibition are: the representations of sexualized "natives" in an abstract context, the images of the white master and the uncivilized colonized people as servants, the biased representation of savages staged in the studio or their everyday lives, and, lastly, the picturesque landscapes of the Orient without any human bodies. Although the desire for Oriental exoticism and the physical presence of Others perpetuates the dominant ideology of Orientalist knowledge through the implantation and dissemination of its informational apparatus, the sophisticated images of the

architectural elements in the bare land re-construct the same imaginary Orient with disappearing symbols of the ancient primitive civilization.

The first group of Orientalist photographs that were prevalent in the nineteenth century portrays the exotic poses of Iranian women, which adopt European Orientalist images. Often, the European tourists act as amateur photographers, who produce the stereotypical representation of the East (Behdad, 2014, p.63). Though this style of photography is not present in *Looking at Persepolis,* the private collection of Naser al-Din Shah, which includes photos of his wives, demonstrates a similar sexualized gaze. As the Orientalist lens peeks a peek into the private space of the colonized people, the exposed body parts represent the imaginary exotic Orient. These images transform Shah's wives in his *harem* into ornamental objects of exoticism (Ritter and Scheiwiller, 2018, p.22). The sexually charged images are a standard topos of Orientalist ideology, which offers the mystery of the East (Nochlin, 1989, p.35).

The second group of Orientalist images typically establishes a power relationship between the colonizers and colonized people by including the colonized subjects, alongside the colonizers, who are central figures in the photos. As Behdad (1994) mentions, common practices used by the Orientalist photographers centralize the white master and decorate the local people as the servant, or "as the props" for the colonizers (pp.75-76). The imagination of the Orient relies on the positioning of colonized people within the frame — mostly in the corners — as the main strategy for reinforcing the hegemonic power of Orientalists.

The third group of images that represents Otherness relies on the ethnographic gaze of Europeans. These images construct the primitive imagination of colonialized people that placed themselves in a lower scale of human existence than Europeans. They mainly contain the staged scenes of the everyday lives of the people. Edhem Eldem (2018), a pioneer photo-historian in Ottoman photography, identified the ethnographic gaze in Pascal Sebah's photographic production as "his shots [staged] local types — from whirling dervishes and street vendors to Turkish ladies — have long inventoried among

the most typical Orientalist products of the time" (pp.29-33). As the submissive subjects are looking away, the spectator is invited to voyeuristically examine their curious attires. As I mentioned above, since the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* included few human bodies — often a local person in the distance with a blurry face — I turned to research on landscape photography and Orientalism.

Keeping these three types of Oriental lens in my mind, I turn to discuss the production of the "Orient" through the photography of sacred geography in the picturesque landscapes. The construction of, particularly the picturesque and ancient appearance of Persepolis, goes beyond the use of the human body within the frame. Similar to the "tourist gaze" of Gustave Flaubert in his photographs from Egypt in the nineteenth century. Derek Gregory categorizes Flaubert's photographs as Oriental souvenirs that accompanied travelers to Europe, and "[…] the material presence of the souvenir authenticates the experiences of the journey [of Europeans]" (Schwartz and Ryan, 2003, p.195). But at the same time, "[…] its dislocation [in Europe] renders its meaningless, and it implies a movement from the real to the imaginary" (ibid, p. 202).

Wendy Shaw (2009) remarks a shift in European photography during the Ottoman Empire "established a sort of lexicon of genres (roughly from 1850) that informed photography as it developed over time in the empire" (p.128). In this genre, the absence of people in photographs did not lessen Orientalization. But instead, landscape photography played a historical and cultural role in picturing people and places. According to Shaw (2009), the compositional patterns for particular, or what Shaw calls "scenography," of the sacred places (*Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives* by Francis Frith, 1858-1859*)* juxtaposed a contemporary landscape and an imaginary of ancient time. This is a common trope in the representations of the "Orient" within early photography and includes a wide shot of an unoccupied scene that signifies a particular ancient history without the presence of its contemporary people. Borrowing from the concept of Shaw's "Scenography", I argue that the picturesque quality of the photographs, as the main theme of *Looking at Persepolis* — in particular, the architectural

views of the ancient monuments of Persepolis aligned with the horizon in the stunning desert of Fars — facilitates Orientalization of the landscape in the absence of its indigenous people. Shaw explains how the scenography in *Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives* furthers the imagination of the timeless existence of the exotic picturesque.

> Photography became an integral part of the colonial project, verifying the foreignness of the colonial Other while simultaneously placing it within the confines of imperial knowledge and surveillance. […] the Biblical reference in the image title suggests that the scenography is Biblical itself, juxtaposing a contemporary landscape with an imaginary production of ancient times. (Shaw in Ritter and Scheiwiller, 2018, p.179)

Similar to Shaw's explanation of scenography, Ali Behdad (2001) points to the absence of colonialized people in landscape photography as a way to portray the imaginative ancient geography that is available to be occupied. He introduces the idea of "Orientalist archeologists" — Europeans who were interested in capturing the images of monuments, specifically Persepolis. I argue, by excluding the people, the photographs of the ruins of Persepolis in *Looking at Persepolis* simultaneously reduces Persepolis to its architectural ruins. Unlike the two types of Orientalists' photography discussed above, the mere landscape in "the scenography" can mistakenly be perceived as an unaltered "truth" or "authentic" document of the "reality". But in Behdad's term, they demonstrate the gaze of "Orientalist archaeologists," who were interested in excavating the sites to support their preconceived notions of the ancient civilizations.

It is important to mention, while the scene of early photography in Iran was saturated with the colonial perspective, Europeans were not the sole power that influenced early photography in Iran. There are a number of photographs showing the country through the eyes of Naser al-Din Shah. In the following section, I will distinguish these two lenses in terms of their ideological approaches.

3.3. Two Political Agendas and the First Daguerreotypes

Besides colonial powers, Naser al-Din Shah, who ruled Persia from 1848 to 1896, was the first king to utilize the camera in documenting events and his political missions successfully. Although photography arrived in Iran during the reign of Mohammad Shah Qajar, its growth and development took place in the Naseri court. Naser al-Din Shah, who was famously interested in history and visual arts, as mentioned above, is identified as the first Iranian photographer and the first Shah to explore the ideological power of the daguerreotype (Tahmasbpour, 2013, p. 61). Examining the context of Iranian photography during the Naseri period and Iranian modernization with top to bottom enforcements, Behdad (2106) argues that the Shah's fascination with the new technology of image-making paved the way for Europeans and Iranians to get close to the Shah. This closeness enabled them to gain the new title of the 'royal photographer' as well as other honorable titles of the Naseri court (p.109). Naser al-Din Shah ordered various photographic expeditions that focused on archeological and religious sites (ibid). He invented and granted royal titles, such as "grand photographer (Akas Bashi)", "special photographer," and "royal (Homayouni) photographer" (Tahmasbpour, 2013, p.43). The earliest known photographer of Persepolis was an Italian officer, Colonel Luigi Pesce (1828-1864), who later trained the Iranian infantry military (Adle,1983, p.256; Tahmasbpour, 2013, p.116). There is not much known about the details of his journey to Iran and the time he spent in Iran. His photographs dated back to the 1850s are amongst the earliest photographs on display in *Looking at Persepolis* at The Polygon in North Vancouver. Chapter 4 provides more details about his operation to contextualize his photographs. I will refer to his reports, writings and letters to investigate the purpose of his work and examine the following questions: how did he receive the mission to travel? How did he interpret and develop Europeans' understanding of the Near East?

According to Tahmasbpour (2013), Naser al-Din Shah understood the image-making technology as a scientific development that enabled him to record

what he perceived as “a real picture of the Shah.” (p.45) For this purpose, the Shah paid careful attention to recording the location and the name of the subjects in the margins of the photographs (ibid). The new technology developed a desire to produce precise copies of the world, which they had been relegated to (Facos,2011, p.194). Tahmasbpour (2002) notes the Shah was passionate about documenting the details of the events or occasions in the margins or on the back of the photographs. These annotations later became a significant source of information for photo historians. As Tahmasbpour (2002) reports, the early photographs taken by Europeans in Persia were often perceived as the documents of the ancient buildings or occasionally the records of the Shah’s travels and ceremonial festivals. Thus, in contrast to the European photos of the abandoned empty regions, the Shah use these photos to gather information about the remotes areas that he could not travel to. By collecting visual knowledge about the less seen areas, he could present himself as the absolute power of the country, who knows everything (Behdad, 2016, p.130).

As mentioned, Naser al-Din Shah took the steps towards institutionalizing photography soon after the arrival of the first photographic process to Iran with the founding of the Royal Atelier and the department of photography at Dar ul-Funun, the first-ever Polytechnique university in Persia. In the following sections, I will elaborate on the significance of Dar ul-Funun and the photographs produced by Dar ul-Funun’s photographers. In the late nineteenth century, European and Iranian photographers who produced most of the photographs before the emergence of the first Persia’s private studios (the 1870s) were funded by three sponsors. Europeans, North Americans and the royal court of Persia. Given the context of the production of the photographs between the nineteenth and the twentieth, I identify two dominant political agendas in the production of the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis.* I will discuss this further in Chapter 4.

3.4. Photographic Concepts and Early Modes of Representation

While photography remained a practice exclusively among the ruling class, and mainly within the Palace walls until roughly 1870 with the emergence of public studios (Tahmasbpour, 2002, p.17; Scheiwiller in Ritter, 2018, p.151), social and political turbulence during the Qajars and Pahlavis influenced photographic concepts. “[W]ithin the context of social, political and cultural shifts of modern Iranian history — the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911), resignation, coup d’etat (1953), dynastic change (1925), the National Front (1949), the World Wars and geopolitical power struggles — photographic concepts and modes of representation found themselves in continuous flux” (Helbig, 2016, p.1182). When the daguerreotype was introduced to the Shah in 1844, it was perceived as a technical recording device to document “reality” mainly by the Shah and the royal family (Tahmasbpour, 2002; Diba, 2013). Despite the political struggles during the reign of Qajars, image-making technology was dominated by the dynastic or the royal narrative. In spite of Persian photographers’ desire for the creative artistic style of photography, Naser al-Din Shah established a royal style of photography that aimed to develop visual documentation of royal events, celebrations, his wives, and etc. (Tahmasbpour, 2002, p. 60). I will discuss further in the next section and draw a link between the thematic patterns of the Shah’s collection and the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* in Chapter 5. Though many albums demonstrate this view, it was not the only approach in Iran’s early days of photography. Two views that dominated photography during the Naseri time: (1) a photograph as a “real” document of happenings, and (2) a new medium for developing artistic styles.

Tahmasbpour (2002) identified references to European forms of realistic image-making in the royal collection at the Golestan Palace (p.132). Yet, in recent studies (published in 2018), he indicates the emergence of an Iranian lens during the 1860s-1880s, which demonstrates the stylistic innovations of Iranian photographers. The early and middle years of the reign of Nase al-Din Shah were

marked by “the intelligent effort of a number of the early Iranian photographers” who transcended Iranian modes and practices to a desirable style of the art community (Tahmasbpour translated by Sheikh, 2018, pp.62-63). By the 1860s, the Shah established the tradition of royal portrait photography widely in Iran. My thesis does not specifically focus on the portraitures, but it is important to point out the relationship between the modes of representation in Iranian art prior to photography, to some extent, guided the style of court photographers.

The longstanding tradition of carving rock reliefs (from antiquity to the dynastic period) and painting the royal portrait are comparable to the early photographs in the nineteenth century. Similar to the illustration of the acceptable dynastic narratives, photography was locally appropriated to perpetuate traditional modes of representation of the power — in the older form of arts — by deploying new technologies. Though by the early twentieth century, the court photographers were one of the most important parts of the royal court. I argue Iranian photography during the Naseri period — especially the court photography included in the exhibition — still does not demonstrate the indigenous lens due to the ongoing sponsorship by the Shah. As Diba (2012) writes, the court photographers were actively engaged in the politics of representation. For this thesis, I am adopting the term “indigenous lens” based on Ritter and Scheiwiller’s (2018) definition. It refers to “local and photographic practices, visual traditions, actors, uses, and contexts of photography […] for an alternative view of photo history in the region” (p.12). More importantly, it seemed the court photographers could practice photography independent of their Western instructors, but “the manner in which they represented themselves and their society did not entail liberation from Western hegemony but constituted a local form of domination” (Behdad, 2016, p.132). During the Naseri time, the modes of representation in photography influenced the codes and conventions in Iranian paintings to the point that the acclaimed royal painter, Kamal ol-Molk — as discussed above — wrote about the use of Richard’s photograph as a reference for his painting (as discussed in section 3.1)

Though the significant photography critics in Iran dismissed the use of the camera as a technique to produce a legitimate art form, and therefore photography in its early years was not considered as a form of artistic practice. Photographers' attempts to produce painting-like photographs opened the door to new possibilities for these photographers. One technique to alter images and reinforce the qualities of a painting in photographic images was to apply a consistent technical modification to the daguerreotype. According to Tahmasbpour (2002), by the early twentieth century, Iranian photographers viewed the camera as a shortcut to create romanticized images and realistic portraits (p.132). This group of photographers, who were still using daguerreotypes, were determined to present photographs that could be as artful as painting (ibid.). The reinvention of new printing and exposure techniques diversified the visuals that they could produce. In this process, the reduction of brightness toward the periphery compared to the image's center established a greyscale fading out to the black and white background. Some of the other stylistic choices created mystical pictures by removing the camera lens or using optical vignetting — darkening of image corners using optic techniques (ibid). During this time, it was common to consider low quality and the blurry images as an art form, as this technique was used to mystify the subject matter. Another characteristic of photography during the Naseri period was the framing and the use of backing.

> Thus photography followed the ancient tradition of framed paintings. By imitating the form and appearance of these frames, which had been made since [the] Renaissance, the frames of photographs also became more ornate and their border decoration more and more elaborate. (Tahmasbpour, 2002, IV)

The tendency to produce painting-like photographs and the technological advancements like printing techniques facilitated the production of decorative photo papers. The canvas-like surfaces of *Looking at Persepolis* are examples of this technique. The glass-enclosed showcase in the center of the exhibition's first room displayed the three albumen photographs mounted on linen by Ali Khan Vali from 1870.

Beyond the material level, the composition of the visual elements in the photographs from the Naseri period includes European painting references, which were evident particularly in nineteenth-century Iranian photography. “Emphasis on perspective and aesthetic aspects of pictures evidenced the modern urge for experimentation in art motivated partly by a quest for effective means to express ideas, partly by sheer curiosity” (Facos, 2011, p.211). After the invention of the camera in Europe, the first photographic compositions and principles were rooted in the naturalism and pictorialism style of painting, also traceable in early photography in Iran.

3.5. Court Photographers or the Indigenous Lens

Since the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* included court photography, it is important to ask: who were the first Iranian photographers? And how were they assigned to photography expeditions? Was there an autonomous tradition of photography in Iran, one free from the local power (during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah) and the influence of Europeans? These questions stem from my examination of the intertwined history of Iranian photography in the nineteenth century and the power relations between the Shah and the early photographers, which shaped the codes and conventions in their photographs. To address the extent to which local forms were carried out through photographic production, I examine the findings of pioneering Iranian photo-historians. In particular, the discussions about the first Iranian photographers, and his appointment by the royal decree shed light on the discourse of power that influenced the production of photographs.

According to Tahmasbpour (2002), in 1915, the first comprehensive history book about daguerreotypes in Iran was written by Mohammad Hasan Khan-e I‘timad al-Saltana, the Minister of Culture and Publication (1877-1934) (p.188). His book *Mar-at al-Beldan (The Mirror of Cities)* (n.d.) includes the first written photography manual in Persian. Though it is not clear where he received his training or whether he just translated a European manual or documented his

experiments, the emergence of an Iranian perspective was undeniably associated with the royal court. Even though the court photographers were often trusted men from the elites, and therefore, their practices were controlled by the Shah, some exceptional photographers within the palace walls who did not fit the usual mould. An unusual but fascinating photographer of the Naseri time was "the first female photographer, Ashraf al-Saltana, the wife of I'timad al-Saltana" (Zoka, 1997, pp.178-179). The presence of women in photographs and even the Royal Atelier was considered improper and contrary to Sharia's law. Yet, Ashraf al- Saltana and other female photographers, including Fatemeh Khanoom and Ozra Khanoom took photographs of women (Zoka, 1997, p.178). However, the photographic practices of this group of diverse photographers were still under the control of the Shah.

As mentioned above, I'timad al-Saltana was a distinguishable photographer and instructor, but according to Yaha Zoka, Iraj Afshar and Chahryar Adle (1983), he was not the first Iranian photographer. *Studia Iranica* (1983) showcases reports, letters and records that prove Prince Malek Ghasemzadeh (1807-1862), Qajar Prince, and a large number of royal family members owned cameras for daguerreotypes and were amongst the first Iranian daguerreotypers. In fact, after the photographs taken by the Naser al-Din Shah, the most photographs were taken by unknown court photographers. Albums or collections were burnt, lost, or dislocated due to political turbulences during the Naseri period, including the coup d'état of 1921. By the end of the twentieth century, they were mainly destroyed in the aftermath of the Islamic revolution in 1979, adding another obstacle to locating the first Iranian photographer. Yahya Zoka (1983) noted that during the period of unrest leading to the Islamic revolution of 1979, Ghasemzadeh's photographs, along with his personal camera disappeared or more likely were burned in the blaze of local protestors (Tahmasbpour, 2002, p.188).

By 1863, Naser al-Din Shah and his servants from his private quarter had learned the various techniques of producing and exposing photographs. The first court photographers were trusted subjects who acquired knowledge of

photography in the same cohort as the Shah at the Golestan Palace (Napipour and Sheikh in Ritter, 2013, p.293). While the appointment of the first court photographer — dated back to 1878 — was recorded by a court chronicler as an honorable royal title, a noticeable number of photographs taken by court photographers were not properly documented properly. Thus, many unknown court photographs can be found in the contemporary collection of Golestan Palace (Tahmasbpour, 2013, p.180). Zoka's (1997) book *Tarikh-e Akkasi* affirms the privilege of this position in the Naseri court. As he quotes, the court chronicler's writing:

> As his [the Shah] gracious mind was set on the promotion and advancement of this science [photography], his sovereign himself… having been informed of this science, decided that one of the servants of the royal court and a trusted [man] from his private chambers should master this skill…[By] royal decree, he should photograph acquaintances and strangers [and] ancient monuments and relics to entertain his royal self during his free time. As such, Aqa Reza, his private servant who today [1295 Hejreh][17] *is aid-de-camp* and the royal purse holder to be trusted and confined and who is one of the true servants born into the royal house, was ordered [by the Shah] to learn this respected science, [and] benefitting from special royal attention, he mastered this science in a short time. (p.117)

The passage above describes how close Aqa Reza (1841-1889), one of the most active court photographers of the Naseri time, was to the inner court. Consequently, he developed a close relationship with the Shah, which brought him the honor of being promoted to the Royal Photographer (*Akas-Bashi*). By 1870, photography was only practiced by the court photographers and under the direct order of the Shah. The court photographers followed the royal decree to generate the desired presentation of the Shah as the ultimate power of the country. In the next chapter, I will discuss the Qajar dynastic narrative evident in the photographs of this time.

[17] The date of the Royal Order in the Islamic calendar, also known as Hijri or Hejreh. 1295 Hejreh is approximately 1878 in Gregorian calendar.

3.6. Photography as Monarch Propaganda Machine

As mentioned above, the Qajar period, particularly under the second ruler, Fath Ali Shah (1797-1834), was recognized for its revival of the rock reliefs in the Achaemenid style. Such sculptures were abandoned after Fath Ali Shah's death (1834) until the reign of Naser al-Din Shah (starting in 1848). Through the translation of Darius's statements (from the first Persian Empire), carved into the rock reliefs of Persepolis, Iranians learned about the technological developments and bureaucratic Organizations that took place during his reign (522 BCE to 486 BCE). These advancements included: construction projects, the reform of the taxation system, and the creation of a uniform monetary system. Most of which played a major role for political stability (Lerner, 1980). With the uncovering Cyrus cylinder (Cyrus's reign was 539 to 530 BCE), there were speculations that the first "human rights statement" was written by Cyrus and contributed to a picture of a democratic nation-state. The archeological expeditions illustrated the ideal picture of the Achaemenid kings who

> coroneted themselves repeatedly and through the local rituals of the peoples […], and the nationalist Iranian historiography interprets this political practice to manufacture consent and legitimize domination as respect for other cultures. (Dabashi, 2007, 22-3)

The translation of the Achaemenid's inscriptions in the twentieth century contributed to the perception of an ancient democratic system of governance under the Achaemenid Empire.

To present the Shah as an absolute power of the country and the legitimate predecessor of the Persian Empire in the modern imagination, Naser al-Din Shah ordered a rock relief of himself in the style of Achaemenid. The main characteristic of Achaemenid's reliefs is the central position of the Shah surrounded by the court members and military personals, which was replicated in the Naseri rock relief. In efforts to link his lineage back to the Persian Empire, the Shah's relief was installed on the mountains near the Haraz road, in the vicinity of Shiraz in the southeastern province of Fars. During the Naseri period, it was

common to find relief sculptures in Achaemenid's style, with the exact reproductions or similar motifs explored in the ancient reliefs at Persepolis, in the decoration of many architectural complexes (Tahmasbpour, 2002, p.69). Though these relief sculptures were replaced with decorative ceramic tiles during the late Qajar's period, the same iconography was evident in the buildings and architectural structures. As demonstrated in the photograph of the Shah's relief at Haraz road, which Antione Sevruguin photographed in *Looking at Persepolis,* there is no doubt that photography as a modern medium was also utilized to fulfill the great desire of Naser al-Din Shah to establish himself as a part of this iconography (ibid, p.70).

Some photo-historians argue that the Shah saw photography as a rapid method to fulfill his long-standing desire to produce a realistic painting. On the one hand, as a young painter, the Shah perceived photography as a quick solution to overcome his lack of skill in making realistic pictures (ibid, pp.45-65). On the other hand, the shift from painting to photography was inspired by the painting style that depicted "the grandeur of the Shah's power symbolically represented by his opulent regalia" and exemplifies the type of image that he would have liked to present (Behdad, 2016, p.134). The first photograph in *Looking at Persepolis,* (1875) exemplifies this transition from portraiture painting to photography. This photograph was the only portrait by itself, far from the others, in the exhibition. The Shah's image, in his formal attire, embodies the shift from painting to photography in royal portraiture, and therefore simultaneously maintains the old traditions in a new form. The assumption that images were unaltered records of reality enabled the Shah to establish photography as the most desirable means of representation of himself and his court. These images, which are currently preserved in the Golestan Palace's archive, are common in the glorious presentation of the Shah as well as photographs depicting the miserable appearance of his opponents restrained in chains with shackles, as I discuss in Chapter 4 (ibid).

In 1848, when Naser al-Din Shah was trained by Richard Khan, like other amateurs in his entourage, he began documenting everything happening in the

court. But the gradual improvement in his framing and selection of his subjects demonstrated his careful considerations and use of compositional techniques. In fact, all pioneering photo historians agree that he achieved an in-depth understanding about the power of the image-making process that enabled him to utilize the camera as an ideological tool. Since the subjects of the photographers were often determined by the Shah, the close examination of the royal collection by Tahmasbpour (2002) reveals the Shah's systematic approach to photography. The Shah perceived photography as a technique for depicting himself in ceremonial activities or other events around him. Tahmasbpour (2002) writes about the early years of the reign of Naser al-Din Shah (two years after his coronation in 1850) and notes that he paid great attention to documenting travels, hunting, and other subjects of the Shah's interest. Documentary photography — as Tahmasbpour identified — became an integral part of the Shah's expeditions. The Shah also delegated photographers to the remote areas where he was not able to go himself. To emphasize photograph's function as a document, a summary note, which included the subject, time and place of travels, was usually written on or at the back of the photographs. Such photographs were named "Pictorial reports*"* (p. 273).

Finally, by the late nineteenth century, the rise of different artistic practices globally diversified photographic practices, and for the first time, , photographers from the middle class began to transcend the images of the Shah and his glory. The first appearance of Iranian cultural and historical art practices took place after the rapid growth of private studios. During this time, Antoin Sevruguin, one of the most proactive photographers, opened a private studio along with his brothers. Chapter 4 will discuss his photographic practices in relation to his context and complicated identity. Helbig (2016) writes about the relation between Western photography and Iranian arts from the 1960s to the 1970s:

> The history of Iranian photography reflects not only national developments in society but also in politics and culture. Moreover, Iranian photography has stayed in permanent correspondence with "western" developments and adapted "western" expertise and trends. Nevertheless, Iranian photography is related to the above-mentioned

> mutuality that has evolved in a non-linear synthesis that requires Iranian photography to be seen as more differentiated, as part of the general art history as well as of the national, with its own specific characteristics (p. 1179).

Thus, there is a shift in the practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from representations of the state narrative when “many modes of applying photography were in line with the political agenda of Iran at the time” (Helbig, 2018, p.93) to the presence of the independent private studios, which perhaps contributed to the formation of an indigenous lens in Iran.

3.7. Moving from the Naseri Albums to the Archive

My interest in the Naseri albums lies in what they can tell us about his methodological approaches to the uses of photography. Studying the context of the production and thematic patterns of these albums will assist me in drawing links between the discourses of the exhibition and the historical photographs as the primary source materials for the study of the original discourses of the photographers. The Shah’s obsession with photography and compiling pictorial records resulted in the production of many albums by the court members, royal family members, and governors. Also, as discussed above, the early photographic practices in the Naser al-Din Shah’s court (1848-1896) were divided into two types. The first type was the private collections of Naser al-Din Shah, which presented his life within his private quarters, including the court’s activities and his wives, most of which he took himself as an amateur photographer (Nabipour and Sheikh in Ritter, 2018). The second group includes albums of Persepolis photographed by Europeans. Records from Qajar court chroniclers suggest photographers received the Shah’s order to capture photographs of “acquaintances and strangers, ancient monuments and relics” (Ritter and Schewiller, 2018, p.291). These reports along with the royal decrees, are preserved at the archive in the Golestan Palace but unavailable for further

studies, I will explain below. According to Mohammad Hasan Semsār (2003), the photograph archive in the Golestan Palace in Tehran, where the Qajar dynasty ruled Iran for roughly half of a century, contains 1,040 photograph albums with 42,500 photographs. While Semsār was granted permission to access only 116 albums, the rest of the photographs are under-studied due to the restricted access under the regulations of the current Islamic regime in Iran. As mentioned, after the 1979 Islamic revolution, the Qajar's photographs were removed from the public display because of their references to the monarchs.

During the Naseri period, two leading photography studios were the official Royal Atelier and the photography studio of Dar ul-Funun, which contributed to the production of the photographs and the first albums. The growing number of albums created a demand for a new profession of making photo albums. It soon became a new career that attracted bookbinders, painters, and calligraphers (Tahmasbpour, 2002, pp.139-44). Besides the decorative aspect of albums, it mainly advanced the forms of writing descriptions with additional notes indicating the location, occasion, and the photographer's name. Similar forms of annotations appeared on most of the photographs displayed in *Looking at Persepolis* and in the Naseri albums, as it was the common practice in his time.

In an unusual but extraordinary opportunity, Tahmasbpour (2002) was granted access to conduct a study on the collection of the early photographs located at the archive of the Golestan Palace and the photography archive of the University of Tehran. As a result of his close study, he was able to suggest the chronological order for the set of events that led to the formation of Iranian photography. As he notes, the analysis of the photographs snapped during the early stage of the emergence of photography in Iran (around 1842) indicates that Naser al-Din Shah's photography skills was at the level of an amateur. He captured everything and anything regardless of framing and composition criteria. By 1963, the Shah's systematic approach to photography developed to the point that his collection from this period included at least six main groups. Tahmasbpour names these categories "Pictorial Reports," he identifies the use of camera as the Shah's ideological tool to "get information and visual reports about

the places that he could not go," and as a result, these visual reports enabled him to present himself as a powerful Shah, informed about everything that is happening in the country (Tahmasbpour, 2002, pp.20-60).

The six categories were named "Pictorial Reports," a term Naser al-Din Shah coined after he and his servants learned how to operate the Daguerreotype (Tahmasbpour, 2002; Behdad, 2016). The "Pictorial Reports", or as Behdad (2016) names it, "Pictorial Souvenir," is a photography collection that illustrates the Shah's preferred representation of the local power. In contrast, the photographs from the Naseri period showcased in *Looking at Persepolis* aestheticize the ancient site as a picturesque landscape that satisfies the desire of the Europeans for the glorious ancient past. Behdad (2016) points to the Tahmasbpour's (2002) classification as not only an ideological tool but also a strategic tool that allows the Shah to collect information about the remote regions where he could not be easily accessed:

> As Mohammad Tahmasbpour has observed, the numerous albums of photographs produced by these [Hasan Khan Qajar, Abdullah Qajar, Aqa Reza Khan] and other professional photographers during the late Qajar were considered "visual reportage" (*gozaresh-e tasviri*) [Pictorial Report] for the court, and the images with the handwritten texts below them provided valuable information about people and their activities. Viewed almost exclusively at the time in terms of its evidentiary value, photography was therefore bound up with practices of observation, recording, and documentation in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Iran and the broader Middle East. Photography allowed the monarch and his court to become a modern *rooh al-alemin,* the all-knowing, divine representative who could see and watch his subjects throughout his dominion without actually being there. (Behdad, 2016, p.130)

Although the first "Pictorial Reports" were composed with a focus on the Shah's expeditions, roughly around 1860, they were expanded to include various subjects by 1900. The European photographs (1830-1950) shown in *Looking at Persepolis* show the first steps towards the formation of the Shah's view on the significance of photography and how he could utilize the camera to produce

visual knowledge. For this reason, the photos from unknown places and peoples in the country were his innovative way to receive a comprehensive visual report about the places where he could not physically travel, whether due to safety concerns or dangerous roads. But sending the photographers to these isolated regions would give him access to rarely seen areas.

3.8. Identity Narrative: Photography Expeditions at Persepolis

In 1844, only two years before the first photograph displayed in *Looking at Persepolis* was taken, as discussed above, the photographic process called Daguerreotype was introduced to the Qajar dynasty. Thus, the photographs that I examine in this thesis demonstrate the transition from the early style of photography, when photography was used as an ideological tool by the Shah and the royal court, to after the rise of private studios in the late nineteenth century, which diversified the subjects of the images. However, as mentioned above, the photographers in *Looking at Persepolis* mainly showcased European photographs and only a few photos by unknown court photographers.

In terms of receiving the royal permission to facilitate Europeans access to the site by the Europeans, it could not be and was not solely the Shah's gesture of generosity. In fact, photography expeditions at Persepolis were seen by the Shah as nation-building projects. As many scholars have pointed out, the ruins of Persepolis, the capital of Achaemenid, play a key role in constructing Iranian national identity (Dabashi, 2007; Mousavi, 2012; Mozafari, 2014). Simultaneously, photography was the salvageable tool used to generate and maintain the archeological imagination of Europeans.

Bridging the present and the past enabled the Shah to introduce an "identity narrative [that] connotes a complex story of a people or cultural group" (Mozaffari, 2014, p.6). In this sense, the national heritages, particularly Persepolis, are fundamental to the construction of a national identity that as

Benedict Anderson argues, is an “imagined community” (1983). "It [the nation] is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." (ibid., p.6). Persepolis as a national heritage site — encompassing the memory of a civilization associated with the Aryan race, as discussed in the introduction and examined in the next chapter — contains the mythical memory of a site that always is being negotiated to cultivate the assumptions about the national qualities and identity (Debevoise & Herzfeld, 1937; Mozaffari, 2014). As Anthony Smith (2000) explains, ancient national heritages as a form of cultural product

> point[s] to the continuing force of ethnic attachments, which often undergird the contractual rights and duties of a modern civic order. Communities of language, myths of origin, shared memories and customs, and attachment to the homelands are just some of the enduring cultural attributes […]. In other words, primordial attachments rest on perception, cognition, and belief. It is individual members who assume that these cultural features are givens […], who feel an overpowering sense of coerciveness, and so on. (p.21)

As Mozaffari’s (2014) highlights, Smith employs the term “myth of origin” to address “where we come from, the myth of election, explaining why we are elected above other, and ethnohistory, which is self-explanatory” (p.7). Thus, archeological projects, which were dominated by colonial powers in the nineteenth century, became one of the key sources for the Shah’s nation-building project in the early twentieth century.

The early excavations at Persepolis facilitated the reinvention of collective stories, which provided an answer for the question about “the myths of origin,” and simultaneously, romanticized the lands as ideal ancestral lands, once occupied by ideal ancestors — in the case of Persepolis, it refers to the Achaemenid Empire descending from the Aryan race (Hobsbawn, 1990). In the other words, Persepolis is a “mythologized landscape” (Gardner, 1997) that “transforms landscape from an external phenomenon to a psychic terrain of internalized symbolic meaning” (Osborne, 2001, p.47). The physical landscape of Persepolis symbolizes the land of Persia or homeland of pure Aryans.

> The politics of “purification” were not limited to [the exclusion of] non-Persian ethnic groups; the Persian language, history, identity, and culture too underwent extreme forms of “purifying” in order to be brought closer to the “mythical Aryan race” manufactured by Orientalists. (Asgharzadeh, 2007, p.106)

Any representation of Persepolis can manufacture the glory of ancient Iran and faithfully continue turning the collective identity of Iranians into a unified “imagined community”. However, it is important to ask, whose imagined community?

Ali Mozaffari (2014) identifies two contrary aspects of Iran’s national identity pertaining to their “imagined community,” specifically its pre-Islamic and its Shi´a identity. From the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the image of Persepolis signified the “Imperial Dream” that assisted the Iranian dynasties in reinforcing political unity under an imagined Achaemenid identity (Mozaffari, 2014, p.41). Not long after the 1979 Iranian revolution, the country’s name changed to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and subsequently, Shi´a identity took over the Persian lands and Persian identity. Years after the revolution, the government spent much energy on destroying national monuments and archeological heritage to wipe out the signs of Iran’s royal dynasties, which were constructed as tyrannical monarchical regimes. Even though Persepolis was previously associated with royalty and, in fact, is rooted in pre-Islamic Iran going back to the Achaemenid Empire, some parts of Persepolis have miraculously survived under the contemporary Islamic regime and can be viewed today. Mozaffari (2014) delineates how these two contrary narratives challenge Iran’s nationhood.

> Iran [is] a country with two significant and intertwined layers of history and a collective identity: a deep pre-Islamic layer overlaid with an Islamic, and particularly since the sixteenth century, Shi’i layer. These two layers coexisted and were often mutually reinforcing at both official and popular levels. […] In the official sphere variations of the contending ideologies of nationalism, and Islamism in particular, have challenged conceptions of nationhood, driving debates over the

validation of identity, history, heritage and ultimately a homeland. (p.1)

The site has remained a magnificent source of Iranian pride which has fueled many contemporary debates about the significance of preserving this contested site. However, it brings forward two versions of the collective identity that are inseparable from contemporary Iran. Iranians' Persian identity or "Persian-ness", also known as secular pre-Islamic Persian identity (Mozaffari, 2014, p.42), links Iranians to the Achaemenid Empire that officially practiced Zoroastrianism. This notion of Persian-ness poses a threat to the contemporary Islamic Republic of Iran and its goal to become the centre of power for the world of Islam.[18] In fact, practicing Islam, both as a culture and religion, is an integral part of Iranians' identity. In this sense, the land of ancient Persia divides Iran's collective identity into broken pieces of "Persian-ness," which seeks pride in the Achaemenid Empire and is considered as the secular identity, versus "Iranian-ness," which is intertwined with the current mainstream narrative of Iranian as Muslims. This binary articulates an unsolved problem between the ancient past as the pre-Islamic history and Islamic identity; the sense of nationalism embedded in Persian-ness (being the successor of the Persian Empire) always collides with the official narrative of Iranian-ness that defines the nation under the name of Allah (Mozaffari, 2014). In the narrative imposed by the Islamic regime, the

[18] As Boyce (2003) writes, "the recorded history of Zoroastrianism began with the Achaemenids who ruled in ancient Iran as the first Persian empire (538–331 BCE). […] In Zoroaster's lifetime the Iranians still lived as pastoralists on the Central Asian steppes. However, their Bronze Age society was broke down, the victim of roving bands of warriors. The resulting lawlessness led Zoroaster to meditate profoundly on justice and injustice and on the purpose of life. Finally, he offered, as the revealed truth, a doctrine of cosmic scope. He perceived Ahura Mazda, 'Lord of Wisdom', to be God, the one eternal uncreated being, wholly good, wise and beneficent; but opposed to him he apprehended Angra Mainyu (Pahlavi: Ahriman), the 'Evil Spirit', ignorant and malign, likewise uncreated but doomed in the end to perish. Ahura Mazda created the world in seven parts: sky, water, earth, plants, animals, man and fire (a vital force that gives life and warmth to the rest). It was to be a place where good and evil could encounter each other and evil would be destroyed. To help in this great struggle, Ahura Mazda emanated six mighty powers, the Amesha Spentas or 'Holy Immortals', each of whom was a guardian, with him, as one part of creation. The chief of these powers is Asha, the personification of truth, justice and order and the guardian of fire. Zoroaster appointed fire as the icon in whose presence his followers should pray" (Oxford Art Online: Oxford University Press, n.d.).

quality of being Muslim becomes essential for being a true Iranian. Yet Iranians refer to their overarching race as “Persian.” Although Iranians, especially in the diaspora, address themselves as Persians, many of them practice Islam. Daniel Ahadi (2016) describes the relationship between “Iranian-ness” and “Persian-ness” as a melancholic relationship between “Arab-ness,” and by extension, “Muslim-ness” (p.157). This unresolved conflict manifests itself in the identity of Persians today. Despite the fact that Persians, during the Achaemenid Empire, were followers of the Zoroaster’s prophet, now, the majority of them practice Islam.

After the careful study of the publications on the history of archeology and photography in Iran, I conclude that an examination of early photography and the role of early photography expeditions in the Shah’s nation-building project require a close study of the Achaemenid history in relation to Iran’s collective identity. However, three following factors hinder understanding of the Achaemenid capital, Persepolis, which also contributes to the mystification of the site. First, as mentioned above, there was a series of invasions throughout the history of the Persian Empire, which halted the practice of ancestral language and religion. The long years of invasion by Alexander and, years later, the Muslim conquest (633-651) put a complete pause on performing ritual ceremonies, speaking and writing in Persians’ native language, as they were deemed to be illegal and people ought to respect the rules. The second contributing factor was the smuggling and loss of many inscriptions that left Iran in the hands of European enthusiasts and archeologists between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Lastly, after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the vast archeological lands were destroyed by the extremists, and the heritage sites were abandoned because they signified the legacy of monarchs.

In this chapter, I discussed two main photographic practices by Europeans and the court photographers under the direct order of the Shah. As I discussed above, shortly after the first daguerreotype was delivered to Mohammad Shah Qajar in 1844, Naser al-Din Shah paid a close attention to photography by controlling the production of images and using them for his own political aims.

Furthermore, this chapter discussed how early photography followed the long-lasting tradition of royal portraiture paintings in Iran to illustrate a powerful "dynastic image" (Behdad, 2016, p.134). In the early days of photography in Iran, there were two modes of representation: the Orientalist lens and the Shah-centered lens. In this chapter, I demonstrated that prior to the rise of private studios (the 1870s), photography was used as an ideological tool by the Shah, and therefore during this time, photography was practiced solely by the court photographers and presented the Shah's narrative. But based on Ritter and Scheiwiller's definition of indigenous photography (as mentioned above), the court photographers' lenses cannot be considered as an indigenous lens since they did not offer an alternative view of the country different from the European photographers. To investigate into the narrative of the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* in the next chapter, I will also contextualize the photographic practices of the four photographers highlighted in *Looking at Persepolis* in relationship to the nature of their expeditions and their gaze.

Chapter 4. From European Gaze to the Depiction of Homeland

This chapter examines the overarching Orientalist ideology informing the four European photographers highlighted in *Looking at Persepolis:* Marcel-Auguste Dieulafoy (1844-1920), Luigi Pesce (1828-1864), Hans Wichart von Busse (1903-1962) and Antoin Sevruguin (1870-1933). In order to examine the European gaze of their photographs, I investigate the colonial and political contexts of their photography expeditions. These photographers also demonstrate the flux in the agendas of early photography in Iran, depending on their sponsors and the political context of their production. Moreover, they not only represent four distinctive time-frames in the history of photography in Iran, but they also are associated with different European powers with different agendas in the Middle-East. This enables me to examine their photographic practices at the meso-level.

4.1. Marcel Auguste Dieulafoy

According to Mousavi, the period of French excavation in Iran is marked by the arrival of Marcel Dieulafoy (1844-1920) and his wife, Jane Dieulafoy (1851-1916); they were the first to obtain royal permission to excavate in Iran (in Potts, 2013, p.6). His exceptional contribution to the knowledge about the ruins of Persepolis includes a draft of the first-floor plan of the site explored in the 1880s (Sami, 1969, pp.338-339). It is worth noting that Dieulafoy's project in Persia coincides with the presence of Richard Khan in the Qajar's court. However, I was unable to find any information in the existing literature relating them or their missions to each other.

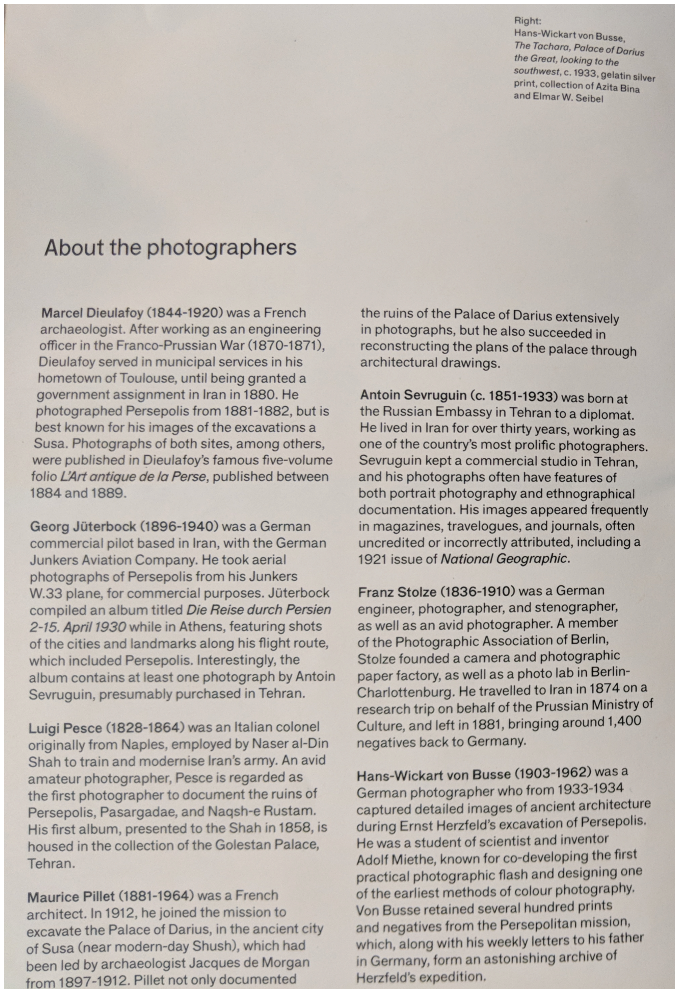
The exhibition catalogue (see in Figure 4) describes Dieulafoy as a French engineering officer in his forties. After serving in municipal services in his hometown of Toulouse in France, he received permission from the Shah to excavate archeological sites of Persia in the 1880s (exhibition catalogue, 2018,

p.5). However, contrary reports show ”[w]ith Viollet-le-Duc’s encouragement Dieulafoy left his post in the French Army in 1880 and requested an unpaid assignment in Persia” (Gran-Aymeric, 1991, p. 96). Nonetheless, after quitting his job, he received “modest” funding granted by the department of Ancient Antiquities at the Louvre Museum (Gran-Aymeric, 1991, pp. 97-135). Dieulafoy’s obsession with ancient Persia is not merely rooted in his interest in the culture of Persia. Jane Dieulafoy refers to her husband’s hypothesis about the genealogy of Islamic architecture as the main reason for his fascination with Persia. In her words:

> Marcel was deeply persuaded that Sassanid (Sassanian) had an overwhelming influence on the origins of Islamic architecture and that it was through the study of the monuments of Khosrow and Shāpūr that it would one day be possible to substitute for ingenious theories reasoning based on solid foundations (Cognat, 1921, pp. 5-6 quoted in Iranica, 1995).

The exceptional scope of his collection encompasses a wide range of archeological sites in contemporary Iran, but mainly focuses on Susa and Persepolis. From 1881 to 1882, he also examined Persepolis and published his major five-volume folios[19] (1884-1889), including his photographs and drawings. His breakthrough publication is named *L’art antique de la Perse (1844-1920)*. It includes the detailed drawings of Persepolis, the Apadana, the Acropolis or citadel, the Ville Royale, and the Ville des Artisans.

[19] His original folios are written in French and since I do not speak French, to study his folios and complete my examination, I refer to the English text translated by, Zohreh Bakhtiari, my family member, who has a degree in the French literature.



Right:
Hans-Wickart von Busse, *The Tachara, Palace of Darius the Great, looking to the southwest*, c. 1933, gelatin silver print, collection of Azita Bina and Elmar W. Seibel

About the photographers

Marcel Dieulafoy (1844-1920) was a French archaeologist. After working as an engineering officer in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), Dieulafoy served in municipal services in his hometown of Toulouse, until being granted a government assignment in Iran in 1880. He photographed Persepolis from 1881-1882, but is best known for his images of the excavations a Susa. Photographs of both sites, among others, were published in Dieulafoy's famous five-volume folio *L'Art antique de la Perse*, published between 1884 and 1889.

Georg Jüterbock (1896-1940) was a German commercial pilot based in Iran, with the German Junkers Aviation Company. He took aerial photographs of Persepolis from his Junkers W.33 plane, for commercial purposes. Jüterbock compiled an album titled *Die Reise durch Persien 2-15. April 1930* while in Athens, featuring shots of the cities and landmarks along his flight route, which included Persepolis. Interestingly, the album contains at least one photograph by Antoin Sevruguin, presumably purchased in Tehran.

Luigi Pesce (1828-1864) was an Italian colonel originally from Naples, employed by Naser al-Din Shah to train and modernise Iran's army. An avid amateur photographer, Pesce is regarded as the first photographer to document the ruins of Persepolis, Pasargadae, and Naqsh-e Rustam. His first album, presented to the Shah in 1858, is housed in the collection of the Golestan Palace, Tehran.

Maurice Pillet (1881-1964) was a French architect. In 1912, he joined the mission to excavate the Palace of Darius, in the ancient city of Susa (near modern-day Shush), which had been led by archaeologist Jacques de Morgan from 1897-1912. Pillet not only documented the ruins of the Palace of Darius extensively in photographs, but he also succeeded in reconstructing the plans of the palace through architectural drawings.

Antoin Sevruguin (c. 1851-1933) was born at the Russian Embassy in Tehran to a diplomat. He lived in Iran for over thirty years, working as one of the country's most prolific photographers. Sevruguin kept a commercial studio in Tehran, and his photographs often have features of both portrait photography and ethnographical documentation. His images appeared frequently in magazines, travelogues, and journals, often uncredited or incorrectly attributed, including a 1921 issue of *National Geographic*.

Franz Stolze (1836-1910) was a German engineer, photographer, and stenographer, as well as an avid photographer. A member of the Photographic Association of Berlin, Stolze founded a camera and photographic paper factory, as well as a photo lab in Berlin-Charlottenburg. He travelled to Iran in 1874 on a research trip on behalf of the Prussian Ministry of Culture, and left in 1881, bringing around 1,400 negatives back to Germany.

Hans-Wickart von Busse (1903-1962) was a German photographer who from 1933-1934 captured detailed images of ancient architecture during Ernst Herzfeld's excavation of Persepolis. He was a student of scientist and inventor Adolf Miethe, known for co-developing the first practical photographic flash and designing one of the earliest methods of colour photography. Von Busse retained several hundred prints and negatives from the Persepolitan mission, which, along with his weekly letters to his father in Germany, form an astonishing archive of Herzfeld's expedition.

Figure 4 The Exhibition Catalogue from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Elmira Habibullah, 2018, p.5

Given the challenging nature of the routes to the region of his expedition and unpaved roads to Persepolis in the nineteenth century, it might seem inconceivable to self-fund an archeological expedition at the site. Yet his folio reveals the research he accomplished, which was the basis for a far-reaching anthropological hypothesis about the racial origin of Europeans in Persian plateau. This evidence reflects that during this period European elite and government were interested in the racial theories. In each volume, Dieulafoy includes slightly different materials, but the narrative remains focused on the origin of Achaemenid: (1) Monuments de la vallée du Polvar-Roud (part1 Monuments of the Polvar-Roud Valley); (2) Monuments de Persépolis. (part2-

Monuments of Persepolis.); (3) La sculpture persépolitaine. (part3- Persepolis sculpture.); (4) Les monuments voutés de ''époque achéménide. (part4- Vaulted monuments from the Achaemenid period.); and (5) ptie. Monuments Parthes et Sassanians (Parthian and Sassanian monuments). Since Dieulafoy's folio is in French, I have relied on the existing translations (see Iranica, 1983; Abdi, 2008; Mousavi, 2013). The first volume, which is available on archive.org, depicts his detailed drawings and studies of the architectural buildings and artifacts at Persepolis. In the same volume, Dieulafoy's discussion about stone reliefs at Pasargadae traces the presence of Aryans on the Iranian plateau back to the Greeks in Ionia and Lycia. He argues that "the tombs and the Palace […] were not original conceptions or copies of monuments built in the countries bordering on Fārs, but rather reproduced, with adaptation to Aryan customs and the previously existing structures of the Greeks in Ionia and Lycia" (Dieulafoy, Vol1 ,1884 quoted in Iranica 1995). Dieulafoy's remark links the Greeks to Aryans, but it does not openly make any claim about the origin of Aryans yet.

Nonetheless, the next two volumes tackle the "myth of origin" — as a source of "collective cultural identities" — by claiming Aryans and Greeks originated from the same race. In the same volume, he supports his hypothesis by providing artifacts, and meticulous measurements of buildings at Persepolis. In the third volume, he concludes "both Greek statuary and Persian statuary are derived from the schools of Assyria" (Dieulafoy, Vol III ,1884 quoted in Iranica, 1995). Yet what some have called the fictitious nature of Dieulafoy's interpretation (Mousavi, 2013) is reflected not just in his unsubstantiated claims about the racial origins but also in his failure to acknowledge the threads of conflicts between two nations (Persia and Greece). This raises these major questions, namely: How did he sift through the historical data that studied the migration of Indo-European groups who are mentioned in the textual sources associated with Western Iran? Why is there no mention of Achaemenid or their capitals in ancient Greek texts? Why did these distant cousins face each other in historical battles that eventually led to the fall of the Achaemenid Empire and the destruction of Persepolis by Alexander? His next two volumes focus on an

interpretation of the archeological evidence that mistakenly link “the vaulted monuments of Sarvestān and Fīrūzābād in Fārs” to the Achaemenid time (Dieulafoy, Vol IV ,1884 quoted in Iranica). Subsequently, he writes that the dome-shaped architecture often seen in Islamic buildings in Syria and the medieval architecture of France is derived from Achaemenid architectures in Persia (Dieulafoy, Vol V ,1884 quoted in Iranica, 1995).

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, 1889 marked the end of Dieulafoy’s mission in Persia and the beginning of French monopoly over Iranian archeological landscapes. Naser al-Din Shah officially granted them the exclusive rights to excavate in Persia (Chevalier, 2002, pp.512-16; Nasiri, 2004, p.200). “In the remarkable period of the Third Republic (1870-1914), the French resumed their activities in Iran but this time with a long-term program directed by Jacques Jean Marie de Morgan (1857-1924)” (Mousavi, 2013, p.6 in Potts). The French government failed to report to Persian officials about their findings and excavations during their monopoly over the Iranian archeological landscapes. Unlike Dieulafoy’s time when the government of Persia allowed French expeditions conditionally, in the new agreement, “de la délégation en Perse” (1894), the French government obtained unlimited excavation rights. Prior to this new French monopoly, the previous agreement specified that the French government was responsible for sharing its findings equally with the Persian government and leaving all metal artifacts to Persians (Gran-Aymeric, 1991, pp.96-135). From roughly 1884 to 1927, more than 40-years of French presence in Persia overshadowed this new chapter of excavating Iranian archeological landscapes. During this period, “the most important archeological sites in Iran [and in particular Susa were] turned into an antiquities quarry […]” (Abdi, 2008, p.756).

Dieulafoy’s earlier discoveries included invaluable objects; he even contributed to the archeological knowledge of time by successfully tracing back fragments of a brick wall to the Achaemenid town (Mousavi, 2013, p.6). Not surprisingly, numerous artifacts uncovered by Dieulafoy, such as a two-headed Bull, lions’ relief, etc., were delivered to France (though the date of the delivery is

unknown) and are currently displayed in the Louvre Museum in the Dieulafoy room (Louvre.fr Retrieved 12 July 2020).

As Mousavi (2013) points out, Dieulafoy's writing and his interpretations of archeological findings were fictitious, which is apparent in his two other publications describing his journeys in the Middle East. "The amalgam of reality and imagination bridged his living experience in Susa to adventurous stories that led to the publication of two novels in 1887 and 1888 in Victorian Romantic style" (Potts, 2013, p.6). Though he contributed extensively to European knowledge about the Orient, it is unclear why he was listed in the exhibition's curatorial statement while his photos were not included in *Looking at Persepolis.* However, his role as the pioneer of the French excavation in Iran provides insights into the initial motive of European archeological expeditions in Persia. His photography and writings about the racial hypothesis shed light on the circumstances under which the next photographer, Italian Colonel Luigi Pesce arrived at Persepolis.

4.2. Luigi Pesce

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, while the European photographers in Persia were mainly British and French, Luigi Pesce was amongst one of a few Italian photographers (there was also Antonio Giannuzzi and Luigi Montabone) who arrived in Iran during the emergence of photography in the Naseri court (Bonetti and Prandi, 2013, p.14). According to the exhibition's catalogue (2018), Luigi Pesce (1828-1864) "[…] was an Italian colonel originally from Naples, employed by Naser al-Din Shah to train and moderni[z]e Iran's army […] His first album, was presented to the Shah in 1858, and currently is housed in the collection of the Golestan Palace, Tehran." (exhibition catalogue, 2018, p.5)

He conducted several photography expeditions to document Pasargadae, Persepolis, and Naqsh-e Rustam. Historically, Pesce's self-funded photography expedition (Tahmasbpour, 2002, p.25) was the second attempt by the Shah to

initiate a photography expedition to Persepolis after the unsuccessful attempt by Richard Khan due to lack of funding (exhibition's catalogue, 2018, p.1).

At the beginning of my research, I was unsure how to situate Pesce in the context of colonial powers. After consulting the limited number of publications about him, I discovered ambiguity about the source of his funding for his various expeditions in Persia. In contrast with the other publications (Heinrich Brugsch, 1861, p.viii quoted in Mousavi, 2013, p.138), Adle et al. (1983) write since Pesce photographed Persepolis shortly after — only eight years — Richard Khan, it is hard to believe the Naser court funded him. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Richard Khan's expedition to photograph Persepolis was unsuccessful due to a lack of funding from the Shah. Adle et al. (1983) argue that "it is difficult to imagine that he [Pesce] would not have done the work either at his own expense or with borrowed funds pending the release of the shah's promised stipend"; it is more reasonable to believe "he did so at his own expenses" (quoted in Mousavi, 2002). Pesce's interest in photographing Persia was not his primary motivation for travelling to the country. In fact, in the effort to modernize the Persian army, Naser al-Din Shah assigned Colonel Pesce to train the Qajar soldiers. Despite the uncertainty about his funding, there is no doubt that the Shah ordered Pesce's photography expedition in Persepolis. Heinrich Brugsch (1862), a German archeologist who was sent to Persia in the 1860s, describes "a friendly Italian officer [named Pesce] in the service of the Shah who "lent him a few photographs to incorporate in his book" (Brugsch, 1861, p. viii quoted in Mousavi, 2013, p. 138).

Unlike Dieulafoy's project, which was sponsored by French organizations and contributed to his arguments about Aryan as the superior race, the nature of Pesce's mission in Persia is still unclear. On the one hand, since he was under the direct order of the Shah, one might assume his photographs of the ancient sites were part of the Shah's collection for his nation-building project instead of the Orientalist's projects to find supporting evidence for their racial theories. However, Pesce's photographs do not represent a different gaze compared to the gaze of other European Orientalists, as discussed below. On the other hand,

the studies conducted by Nabipour and Sheikh (2018) demonstrate Pesce's albums still exist in the Golestan Palace in Iran. To understand whether Pesce and his photographs were part of the project of colonialism, it is important to ask, did his photographs contribute to the formation of Europe's imaginary representation of the Orient? And if his photography albums taken under the order of Naser al-Din Shah were meant for the Shah's collection instead of representing the Orient for the European audiences, why did he print the extra sets of the photographs, which was sent to Europe and were purchased by Bina and Siebel, two Americans?

In terms of the stylistic choices, Pesce's photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* showed the characteristics of European "Scenography." For instance, the wide shots included ancient columns and the humongous entrance gates to the halls — as I defined it in Chapter 3. In the next chapter, I will discuss and compare the pattern of his and other photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* in more detail. However, due to the lack of written documents about his photography expedition and military mission in Iran, I did not find any evidence to confirm that he contributed to the theories of racial origins.

During the public tour at The Polygon Gallery, Seibel — the collector who lent the photographs to the gallery — mentioned that non-Iranian photographers often developed two sets of prints furtively. Once their expeditions were completed, one copy was gifted to the Shah, as the only version of the photographs produced exclusively for the Shah, while another copy left Iran (Seibel, Nov 03, 2018). Though I did not find any published source to confirm his statement, it could explain why there is no report about the production of the second or, in some cases, multiple copies of the albums currently are kept at the photography archive of Golestan Palace. Seibel (Nov 03, 2018) added that the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* are similar or exactly the same as their Iranian version. Hamid Sadigh (2009) in *Jahan News* — an official Iranian newspaper — reports the same date for when Pesce gifted his album to the Shah, with his photographs of ancient buildings, as when they were sent to Prince William I, the King of Prussia. Although he did not identify his source,

Tahmasbpour (2013) confirms that while Pesce later sent copies of this album to several European aristocrats, he also sold single copies of the photographs in the albums to European residents of the capital city, Tehran (p.8). Due to limited access to the Golestan photography archive, I am unable to confirm whether Pesce's albums in Iran are the exact copies of what was on display in *Looking at Persepolis* or not. For this reason, I rely on the most recent study of the photography archive at the Golestan Palace published by Nabipour and Sheikh (2018). Their study was based on the photographs that were available for public viewing. This small collection is named "Shadow albums."[20] The content analysis of "Shadow albums" conducted by Nabipour and Sheikh (2018) demonstrates thematic consistency with the collection of Azita Bina and Elmar Seibel taken by Pesce in the 1880s. There is limited information on details of his mission, including the details about his funding and the length of his stay in Iran. Still, he is considered to be the first photographer who left Persepolis untouched and without any records of smuggling the artifacts.

4.3. Hans Wichart von Busse

Some scholars believe the international era of Iranian archeology began in 1927 (Mousavi, 2013; Jenkins, 2011). During this time, the young professional photographer Buss was an excavation photographer who joined the German excavation team led by Ernest Herzfeld in 1932 (Iranica Vol. XIII, 2003, pp.296-

[20] The collection of "Shadow albums" refers to the photography collection that is currently available to members of the public and scholars. It is located at *Albumkhaneh* in the Golestan Palace archive. There is no official record about the exact number and the names of the total remaining albums at the *Albumkhaneh* after the Islamic revolution of 1979. While the Shadow albums studied by Nabipour and Sheikh (2018) included 116 albums out of a total of 1,040 albums, it is not clear whether pioneering photo-historians — such as Yahya Zoka (1997), Chahryar Adle (1985), Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour (2002), and Hasan Semsar (2004) — could have access to more albums in *Albumkhaneh*. However, it is possible that these authors took advantage of the changing political climate of their time, and extended their research beyond what is available today since the thematic analysis, and the claims made by these authors demonstrate a wider range of categories and data than later scholars. Thus these early photo-historians contributed an enormous amount of information about albums that are currently inaccessible to the contemporary scholars.

98). By 1928, after abolishing the French monopoly on excavations (as discussed above), Herzfeld had established his name as a German Jewish archeologist and a well-known advocate of the Iranian heritage (Jenkins, 2011, p.3). As the exhibition's catalogue (2018) indicates:

> Hans Wichart von Busse (1903-1962) was a German photographer who from 1933-1934 captured detailed images of ancient architecture during Ernest Herzfeld's excavation of Persepolis. He was a student of [the] scientist and inventor Adolf Miethe, known for co-developing the first practical photographic flash and designing one of the earliest methods of colour photography. Von Buss retained several hundred prints and negatives from Persepolitan mission, which, along with his weekly letters to his father in Germany, form an astonishing archive of Herzfeld's expedition" (p.5).

Though Busse's mission can be considered as the first scientific photography expedition, which took place in Persepolis systematically, I argue that since he was part of Herzfeld's archeological expeditions, his photographs contributed to the construction of the imagery presentation of the Orient. Besides having formal training in photography, his approach to Persepolis was scientific. He provided documentation for Herzfel's archeological findings and claims with the exquisite photographs of the details of the site's stone reliefs (Appendix B). While he was familiar with colour photography, his collection in *Looking at Persepolis* consisted of only black and white images. Simultaneously, his knowledge about the practical photographic flash helped him develop high saturation images with exceptionally high resolutions as shown in Figures 5, 6 and 7.

Though I did not find many publications about Busse and his photographic practice, to examine his contribution to the construction of Iran as the Orient, I will discuss the overarching ideology of the archeological projects that he took part in the next section. First, I will elaborate on the details about his involvement in the German archeological project at Persepolis by highlighting the political context

and the change in dynastic power. Next, I will briefly point to the significance of the Aryan race for German Nazism.

Figure 5 Un-numbered postcard series by Hans Wichart von Busse (Not Dated) from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Elmira Habibullah, 2018

Figure 6 Un-numbered postcard series by Hans Wichart von Busse (Not Dated) from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Elmira Habibullah, 2018

Figure 7 Un-numbered postcard series by Hans Wichart von Busse (Not Dated) from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Elmira Habibullah, 2018

Herzfeld and Politic of Antiquity

Germans began working on the Iranian archeological sites roughly in 1917 while the archeological landscape of the country was still under the French monopoly. Besides benefiting from the political and economic advantages in Iran, finding scientific evidence about the ancient past to support their racial theory of Aryan superiority was crucial for their nation-building project (Marchand, 1996, p.196). The attempt to reconstruct Iran as part of "Western civilization's" imaginary past was at the core of their archeological expeditions in Iran. The organization (German-Persian Society), founded in 1918, was committed to researching the ancient Orient, "by which was meant the territories of the ancient empires of Assyria, Babylon and Sumer" (ibid, pp.197-225). To create an alternative narrative of Europe's civilizational origins, "[the] government agencies and state cultural institutions —the Prussian Parliament, the Imperial Museums in Berlin, the German Archaeological Institute and the Orient Society— financially supported projects [first] in the Ottoman provinces and turned an acquisitive eye on Iran" (Jenkins, 2011, p.4). Orientalism was mainly a British and French cultural enterprise, with Germany's leap into colonial activity taking place long after the British and French governments. In the late nineteenth century, the search for Germany's ancient past led historical institutions and scholars to unite under the banner of German nationalism. As the nationalistic movements in Iran — galvanized in the early twentieth century — advocated for restricting foreign access to their cultural resources and national heritages, European powers set the stage for fierce battles over Iranian excavation sites. Germans, who were already familiar with the invaluable archeological landscapes of the Near East because of their presence in the neighboring territories of the Ottoman Empire, now directed their attention to Iran as the site of the ancient Persian Empire.

An examination of the archeological project that Busse was involved in provides insight into the German's version of the race theory, which links them to the ancient history of Persia. After receiving his professorship (1920), Herzfeld was keen to set foot in Persia as the first full professor in Near East Archeology

at Berlin University. It is unclear how Herzfeld started his first exploration in Persepolis during the French monopoly over the archeological expeditions. According to Mostafavi, after Reza Khan, the acting Minister of War in the Qajar court, visited the site in 1922 — only three years prior to establishing the Pahlavi dynasty — he complained about the poor condition of the ruins while he was heading to the port of Bushire (Mousavi, 2005, p.458). Herzfeld notes in his essay, “Rapport sur l'etat des reines dePersépolis et propositions pour leur conservation (1929-1930)”, that he had an Iranian ally from the Qajar court. As Mousavi (2005, p.456) writes, in the last days of the Qajar dynasty, Prince Firouz Mirza supported Herzfeld and paved his way to Persepolis.

At the height of political unrest that resulted in the coup of Reza Khan and the end of the Qajar dynasty, Herzfeld deepened his relationship with the Pahlavi court and went on to become the only foreign member in Reza Shah’s Society for National Heritage in 1923 (Exhibition’s Catalogue, p.1, 2018). Herzfeld successfully lobbied to end the exclusive excavation rights of the French government. He understood that to begin his excavation in Iran officially, he had to abolish the French monopoly over Iran’s archeological sites. Thus, he met with an array of powerful figures, including diplomats, archeologists, and business leaders from both Iran and Germany. Finally, in a meeting with the Reza Shah’s Society for National Heritage (1927), Mohammad Ali Foroughi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran, opened his speech about the importance of preserving Iran’s national heritage and then delivered the podium to Herzfeld. In this exceptional meeting, Herzfeld’s speech addressed the nationalists by urging Iranians to preserve Persepolis from robbery and further destruction; he also spoke of the significance of the ruins as the ancestral lands of pure Aryans. Given Reza Shah’s desire to rebrand the newly named country, Iran, he found even more supporters among the elites and members of the Iranian parliament. His modest request to protect Persepolis from thugs and further destruction resulted in receiving government funding. However, he leveraged the government’s funding to illegally initiate his first excavation at the site (Mousavi, 2005, pp.457-59). In contrast, some scholars dismiss the possibility of any illegal

activities and argue Herzfeld was an accredited Iranian nationalist who successfully uncovered Iranian national monuments. His findings and highly effective speech ended the French monopoly over Iranian archeology (Blücher, 1935; Jenkins, 2011). He also linked the Orient to the West with the central argument that identified pure Aryans — at first as Christians, but then he revised his claim to Zoroastrians — who were ruled by the Achaemenid Kings (ibid).

In 1932, he began the first scientific excavation in Persepolis after years of acting as an influential figure in the Iranian political scene. 1932 to 1934 certainly mark the dawn of a new systematic approach to studying the ruins of the Achaemenid capital (Mousavi, 2012). Herzfeld's archeological expedition provided evidence for connecting Iranian and German prehistory by combining both as two different versions of the Aryan race. The discussion about Herzfeld's archeological findings focuses on German's racial theory, which is rooted in Germany's political climate during the rise of Nazi ideology. In this context, Herzfeld's reconstruction of prehistory can be seen as being ideologically driven by ideas about the German master race. Herzfeld's findings and hypothesis provided basic tools to produce an imaginary picture of the past through "multiple acts of remembering, conjecture, and speculation which embarks on place-making" (Casey, 1996). The active engagement of Herzfeld in constructing a particular version of Aryans relies on the idea of ancestral lands in the ancient past that has been carved into the memory of generations; it plays a central role in the narration of the German nation's history (Shahbazi, 2001; Daryaee, 2001).

It is worth noting during the Second World War, and just after the coronation or in more accurately, the usurpation of the political power by Reza Khan (1925), the ideology about a superior monolithic racial group was echoed in Iran (Asgharzadeh, 2007; Dashti, 2012). In fact, Iran's version of the Aryan race "identifies the Persian minority as the sole founder of civilization on the Iranian Plateau and called on non-Persian ethnic groups to abandon their culture and language for the supposedly superior Aryan/Persian culture and language" (Asgharzadeh, 2007, p.87). Simultaneously, under the Reza Shah's rule, all non-Persian communities were forced to discard their linguistic and cultural practices

as speaking and writing other dialogues (anything other than standard Persian) were illegal (Asgharzadeh, 2002; Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2003). During this period, Reza Shah forcefully blended Iranian-ness with Persian-ness. Despite the fact that Iran announced its neutral position in the Second World War, Reza Shah's positive sentiments about Nazi ideology prompted the British and the Russians to occupy Iran in September 1941 and dethrone Reza Shah (Arjomand,1988, p.68).

4.3.1. The Study of Germanic Pre-history and Far-Right Extremists

Aryan purity and superiority have dominated the public opinion and have been a homogenizing force. The same racist ideology can be traced in a number of scholarly works, such as writings by V. Gordon Childe, a well-known archeologist in European pre-history. His book *The Aryans: A Study of Indo-European Origins (*1926*)* discusses the origin of the Indio-European by employing historical and anthological scholarly works to understand the racial differences. With the rise of Nazi ideology and propaganda, Childe's book made a significant contribution to the right-wing debates on the glories of European civilizations and the superiority of Indio-Europeans. He was a proponent of diffusionism and believed that cultural developments diffused from one place to another, rather than being independently developed in many places (Childe, 1926, p.176). Therefore, he intended to trace the footprint of the German civilizations in the ancient cultures in the Near East.

Even though that Childe was a Soviet sympathizer throughout his life, Nazi ideology shaped his beliefs about the superiority of the Aryan race (Root, 1996, p.235). As Root (1996) notes, Childe's book argued for European superiority as a way to resolve historical gaps such as "why, had Europe, starting the race 1,500 years behind Mesopotamia and Egypt, outstripped those pioneers in a millennium? Why did our continent then continue to progress while the Ancient East stagnated or declined?" (pp. 3-4)

While German scholars were debating ideas about racial identity in the buildup to World War II, Herzfeld's archaeological findings between 1932 and 1934 uncovered a version of German pre-history that severely disrupted the central narrative of National Socialists about German identity. Herzfeld's main scholarly works on Persepolis and tracing the Aryan race in the Orient, contradicted with Volkshunde ideas, which reached recognition just after the rise of fascism (Cash, 1997). Herzfeld's earlier readings of the inscriptions at Bisotun in Iran suggested Achaemenids were Christian Aryans, which supported the German version of Aryans. Herzfeld claimed Bisotun could verify his assumptions about the possible signs of early Christianity in the Near East by associating the reliefs to the legendary hero and figures in Ferdowsi's epic poem of Iran (Kawami, 1987, p. 186). To prove his assumption, he interpreted the name of the site as Mount of the Saint or Holy Man based on the fact that "Khawaja" locally meant "lord" (ibid, p.187). In this sense, his study linked the definition of the German Aryans to Christian Caucasians, which would help Herzfeld maintain his fame even after the rise of the Nazis despite his Jewish heritage. However, in an ideological shift, he argued the Aryans in fact, believed in the prophet Zoroaster; and as a result, he lost his earlier supporters in German nationalism. Given the importance of defining Aryans as Christian Caucasians for the Nazi racial policy, several Iranologists and the right-wing authors criticized Herzfeld's claim, which introduced Zoroastrianism as the root of Christianity (see in Otto Höfler's book *Aryan Folklore*, 1934). Not surprisingly, the escalation of National Socialist ideologies correlates with stripping Herzfeld from his professorship at Berlin University in 1934.

Herzfeld based his claims about the cultural connections between East and West by relying on archaeological evidence (Jenkins, 2011, p.13). In contrast, Childe previously had dismissed any correlation based on the physical characteristics of Germans and Iranians and shifted his attention to linguistic similarities, notably subordinate clauses and a specific kind of identity, which he called "spiritual identity" (Childe, 1926, p.4). The ideological shift in Herzfeld's ideas about Aryans placed him in the opposition to the tenets of the Nazi's racial

theory. Consequently, Herzfeld's hypothesis about racial theory, and his Jewish background resulted in him being categorized as anti-German in his home country. In 1934, he was discharged from the archeological expeditions at Persepolis because of accusations of smuggling accusations, so he left the country. His book collections and articles accompanied him to the United States. His personal papers and art objects were eventually dispersed among American institutions, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Freer Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C. (Jenkins, 2011, pp.17-26). Whether the charges of smuggling were legitimate is still unclear. In the end, it is important to remember that while he initially began the archeological project in Iran in an attempt to find scientific evidence for his racial ideology that would prove the superiority of German as predecessors of Aryans, he left with evidence to disapprove this theory.

4.4. Antoin Sevruguin

Looking at Persepolis had only a small number of photos by Antoin Sevruguin (1851-1933) — thirteen —, but he was the most controversial photographer of the four highlighted photographers. He also covered a wide range of themes (Chapter 5). The distinctive lens of Sevruguin in *Looking at Persepolis* appeared less romanticized than the three other photographers discussed above. His photographs included the excavation's tunnels at Persepolis, broken artifacts and rocks at monumental sites of Persia (including Apadana, Cyrus Tomb, and Naghsh-e Rustam) and colossal inscriptions juxtaposed with a human body, which provided the viewer with the wide shots that show architectural landscapes. However, his aesthetic style of the picturesque landscapes was similar to other European photographers such as Luigi Pesce and Von Busse. The exhibition's catalogue (2018) wrote that he was a photographer who "was born at the Russian Embassy in Tehran to a diplomat" (p.5). His birthplace and family background complicate his identity, and therefore his authorship. The photo-historians, who write about early photography in Iran,

describe Sevruguin with paradoxical titles such as a Westerner, an Orientalist, a Russian, a Georgian, an Armenian, an Armenian-Iranian and lastly an Iranian (Tahmasbpour, 2002; Haghighi, 2018; Iranica, 2003; Scheiwiller, 2018). Scholarly works about his photographs in Iran are divided into two main groups and categorize him either as: (1) a progressive nationalist and Iranian citizen in the heart, or (2) a Western outsider following Orientalist views. Nonetheless, scholars recognize him as a prolific photographer in the late nineteenth century who was the most celebrated Daguerreotyper in the Qajar court. I argue his photographic practices demonstrate a shift from the perspective of an Orientalist who was respected by the royal court respected to an Iranian citizen interested in Iranian nationalism. I examine two aspects of his perspective: his sense of national identity and his photographic practices.

As I was sifting through documents written about the photography archive at the Golestan Palace and scholarly works written by Iranian photo-historians, I noticed he was commonly referred to as an "Armenian-Iranian" or "an Iranian photographer from Georgian descent" (Iranica, 2003; Scheiwiller, 2018, p.1). To unravel these complicated ideas about his national identity, I approach his photographs as textual products, as defined by Fairclough (1995), and analyze his signature on his photos as a mark of his "autobiographical self: the writer's life history and sense of her/his roots" (Clark and Ivanic, 1977, p.137), which evolved over time. Sevruguin marked his photographs with an imprint of his name in three languages: English, Russian, and Persian (in the order from the top to bottom of his photographs). As Scheiwiller (2018) writes, between1892 and 1900, Sevruguin's signature changed from Monsieur Antoin, the Russian photographer, to Antoin Khan. At the beginning of his career in Iran, he was called Akkas-e Rus by Iranians, which means a Russian photographer; after receiving the royal title of "Khan" [21] meaning the lord, he was identified as Antoin Khan (pp.145-7). To

[21] In the interview conducted by Vuurman (1999), Emanuel's, Sevruguin's grandson, claims that he actually does not remember which Shah gave Sevruguin the title of "Khan". According to Tahmasbpour (2002), it is not documented in any of the primary sources that Naser al-Din Shah made Sevruguin a court photographer or bestowed onto him any special distinctions whereas other 'akasbashi' (royal photographer) have been noted. Naser al-Din Shah was assassinated in 1896 — if Sevruguin had been given that title by Naser al-Din Shah, it would appear, then, that

explain his identity, Scheiwiller (2018) suggests that although his official national identity was Russian, he was a "cultural citizen" of Iran (p.167). This term that for the first time, was coined by Renato Rosaldo (1994), American cultural anthropologist means

> The concept of cultural citizenship [that] includes and also goes beyond the dichotomous categories of legal documents, which one either has or does not have, to encompass a range of gradations in the qualities of citizenship. Ordinary language distinguishes full from second-class citizens and tacitly recognizes that citizenship can be a matter of degree […]. Culture in this context refers to how specific subjects conceive of full enfranchisement. It does not refer to culture as either (a) a monolithic, neatly bounded homogeneous social unit, or (b) a realm of art and expressive production as opposed to, for example, the economy (Rosaldo, 1994, pp.57-8).

It is clear that Sevruguin was a Russian citizen, but based on Rosaldo's definition, his sense of belonging is intertwined with cultural aspects of citizenship rather than official records. To establish his view of nationhood and citizenship, Scheiwiller (2018) claims the situation in which historical events, in particular the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, took place in Iran "made its subject "Iranian" by national definition, including Sevruguin himself, who was a cultural citizen and a democratic participant" (p.3). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Constitutional Revolution (1906) and the formation of the first parliament in Persia were the crucial steps for moving towards building an independent country with more or less a democratic ruling system. Thus, Scheiwiller concludes that Sevruguin's participation in the protests and unrests leading to Iran's political changes was a sign of nationalism and concludes that Sevruguin was an Iranian nationalist.

Sevruguin had received the title from Muzaffar al-Din Shah, not his father Naser al-Din, considering that Sevruguin had developed such a close relationship with Muzaffar al-Din Shah while in Tabriz. Vuurman (2003) alludes to this connection, implying that it was his winning of the international expositions in Brussels (1897) and in Paris (1900) that earned him the title of "Khan." According to an imprint after 1897, he still does not record the title "khan," so it would have been in 1900 that he was called "Khan". However, with both those two dates in mind, it could have only been Mozaffari al-Din Shah who gave him the honorific title (Scheiwiller, 2018, p.152).

However, it is not clear what was Sevruguin's role in the Constitutional Revolution. Despite the fact that middle-aged Sevruguin in his 50s resided in Iran, there is no evidence indicating his personal activities or if his commercial studio directly or indirectly assisted the political movements during the early twentieth century. However, when the Shah's forces invaded the Parliament in 1908 (as mentioned in Chapter 2), his studio in Tehran along with all shops located nearby was attacked. Substantial damage was done to his collection when a pro-monarchy mob stormed the capital's streets (Afshar, 1983, p.272; Iranica, 2003; Scheiwiller, 2018). As the unrests turned the streets of Tehran into a battlefield, constitutionalists sought refuge — also historically named as taking "Bast" (strike) — in the British Embassy. Reports that emerged from this historical moment demonstrate that Sevruguin and his family not only participated in the strike, but he also documented the strike from inside of the British Embassy (Stepanian, 1998, p.25; Scheiwiller, 2018, pp.154-55). At the height of the unrest, it is possible that he was forced to go to the embassy after narrowly escaping the attackers who destroyed his studios along with many other shops in the area.

The sense of cultural intimacy and familiarity with the country placed Sevruguin above the other European photographers in the period of early photography, particularly the three other photographers discussed in this chapter. As his grandson, Emanuel Sevruguin Junior — not to be confused with his brother Emanuel Sevruguin — writes about his understanding of his grandfather's legacy, he alludes to the changing of Antoin's last name to "Parvarde-ye-Iran" (nurtured by Iran) as a sign of passion and affection for Iran and Iranian culture (Behdad, 2016, p.78; Scheiwiller, 2018, p.148). Emanuel Sevruguin traces the source of the love for Iran back to Vasil — Antoin's father — by suggesting "that Vasil did not consider himself Russian; rather, it was an identity imposed on him if he were to become a government representative" (Scheiwiller, 2018, p.148). According to Scheiwiller, and Souren Melikian, an Iranian cultural critic, Sevruguin's identity could be understood in relation to his complicated family background following the Russo-Persian war (1804-1813), which was concluded with two treaties as mentioned in Chapter 2 (Scheiwiller,

2018, p.149). Melikian notes, while scholars are unable to identify Vasil‘s place of birth, he might be Armenian from Azerbaijan (ibid), the territories that the Qajar dynasty handed over to Tsarist Russia in The Treaty of Gulistan (1813), and Treaty of Turkmenchay (1828). Given the chronology of treaties, Vasil’s denial of his Russian identity might be due to the fresh wound from losing of his Iranian rights. Although a discussion about Sevruguin’s identity helps photo-historians to understand the various political upheavals that shaped Sevruguin’s identity, and therefore his subjective position in relation to Iran, his artistic style and the peculiar images that he used in his Eurocentric scientific writings cannot be overlooked as this group of his works provided visual evidence for the construction of the biased image of Iran.

Scheiwiller’s discussion about Sevruguin’s identity and his photographs during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 (as mentioned above) fails to acknowledge the significance of his rare photographs of the remote areas. Contrary to the nationalistic argument, Behdad (1994) shifts our attention from Sevruguin’s identity to the political aspects of his aesthetic style by pointing to ideological underpinnings of the scientific and artistic representation of the exotic Otherness that contributes to the construction of the stereotypical view of the Orient in his photographs (pp.1-10). As Tahmasbpour (2002) writes, fluency in Persian (Farsi) language distinguished Sevruguin from other European photographers in the Naseri period and extended the scope of his expeditions to remote villages (pp.108-10). After receiving the royal title of “Khan,” his extensive contribution to six categories of the Royal Pictorial Reports (as mentioned in Chapter 3) was far from the nationalistic lens that Scheiwiller (2018) describes. Though Sevruguin’s representation of Iran in the photos selected for *Looking at Persepolis* was limited to the photographs of Persepolis and one image of the first Iranian railways, the examination of his photographic practices requires further investigation into his stereotypical images of what the Orient represents and his contribution to colonial hegemony needs to be discussed. As Behdad (1994) writes, his photographs of the everyday lives of commoners and rare images of the poverty in the remote regions (1880s-1890s) do not represent

Iranian nationalists' vision of the country. Instead, the themes of daily lives and festivities in domestic settings were rather common European photographic themes that depicted supposedly primitive and uncivilized people of the East, particularly in the late nineteenth century (Roxburgh et al., 2017, p.88). As Behdad (2016) notes, "Sevruguin's photograph is […] both an ideological representation that produces a sense of difference and a nostalgic that establishes a temporal distance between the spectator and the indigenous people" (p.88). His aesthetic style is similar to the Orientalists' perspective of the French painter Jean-Léon Gérôme, the French painter of the late 1860s in Constantinople, who systematically represented the lives of peasants in the far the Middle East as crude and primitive.

> Time stands still in the Gérôme's paintings, as it does in all imagery qualified as "picturesque," including the nineteenth-century representations of peasants in France itself. Gérôme suggests that this Oriental world is a world without change, a world of timeless, a temporal customs and rituals, untouched by the historical processes that were "afflicting" or "improving" but, at any rate, drastically altering Western societies at the time (Nochlin, 1989, p.35).

The crude representation of peasants produces a visible rehashing of the stereotypical views of the people and cultures of the Orient as uncivilized savages.

On the one hand, Tahmasbpour (2002) describes Sevruguin as a progressive photographer compared to other European photographers during the Naseri period since he was interested in exploring the remote regions and peoples as well as archeological sites (p.30). On the other hand, the romanticized view of indigenous lives alludes to the ethnological typology that helps Europeans to reinforce the hegemonic power in the Orient. While Sevruguin actively took many photographs for the Shah's collection, his contribution to the scientific knowledge production of Europeans provided access to the primitive illustration that supported the stereotypical images of the Orient. This type of knowledge production promoted the ethnographic typology of

Europeans[22] at its core (Pratt, 2008). Behdad's (2016) criticism draws attention to the stereotypical representation of the primitive people in his works, which illustrating the rare images of villagers and peasants far behind the wave of technological developments, which were presented as the reflection of Iran's backwards reality. The very scientific exactitude of his gaze is what Behdad (2016) describes as an ethnographic gaze.

> The combination of ethnographic interest and photographic documentation is what made Sevruguin's works useful for a popular variety of [O]rientalism, producing a visual archive of exotic cultures for European audiences in the form of picture books, postcards, and colonial exhibitions that proliferated in the late nineteenth century, displaying objects and peoples of the colonial world (p.92).

The exhibition's catalogue for *Looking at Persepolis* (2018) mentions the use of Sevruguin's lens in the European scientific explorations as follows: "his images appeared frequently in magazines, travelogues, and journals, often uncredited or incorrectly attributed, including the 1921 issue of National Geographic" (p.5). He also photographed archeological sites like Persepolis for Friedrich Sarre's book *Iranische Felsreliefs (Iranian Rock Reliefs)* (1910) published in Berlin (Behdad, 2016, p.92). Sarre (1865-1945), who jointly published this book with Herzfeld, is a well-known German archeologist and Orientalist. As mentioned in Chapter 3, in the beginning, Herzfeld's interpretation of the archeological artifacts, in particular, the inscriptions of Bisotun, supported his racial ideology about the origin of Germans as white Christians (Kawami, 1987, p. 186). Sevruguin's rare photographs from the country's remote regions were also published in the National Geographic and a book written by the German theorists — they were

[22] Similar to the scientific exploration of Europeans that led to the construction of the global system of knowledge about plants, which Pratt names" planetary consciousness" (Pratt, 2008, p.15), Sevruguin's ethnographic lens was a great asset to reinforce the binaries between "the civilized Europeans" and "the savage Orient." Behdad (2016) argues what Pratt (2008) identified as the first major international scientific expeditions by European naturalists to construct the global system of knowledge can be found in Sevruguin's banal representation of villagers as — images belong to scène et types — "the vanishing primitive people" that provided a missing piece for visualization of the Orient as a basic stage of human history (pp.80-89).

credited to an unknown photographer. But finally, Sevruguin received a gratifying acknowledgment by winning medals at European expositions in 1897 in Brussel and 1900 in Paris for his comprehensive photographic survey of Iranian antiquity and people, which Behdad (2016) introduces as "[…] a particularly valuable source of information for the Orientalists, archeologists, and art historians" (p.91-2).

Taking a different position, the critics, who consider him an Iranian nationalist, argue that Sevruguin's photographs of the remote regions demonstrate his desire to explore the photographic practices beyond documenting the elites and the members of the royal court. Rather, as a modernist, they argue that he spotlighted the everyday lives of members of the public. Navab (2002) rejects the exoticism in Sevruguin's lens by calling it the "reality" of the people.

> Sevruguin used his camera to construct counter-representations. Even as others were using photography for purposes of classification and domination, Sevruguin allowed the people in front of his camera to compose themselves according to how they themselves wished to be seen, according to their own myths and realities. Because of this mutual construction and collaboration, the people in his photographs stand out and speak to us today as subjects, not objects. Sevruguin does not over-simplify Iran; he complicates it (Navab, 2002, p.114).

Navab dismisses the idea that Sevruguin's photography practice shows ethnographic gaze by arguing that since Sevruguin did not stage the scenes of the everyday lives, the modest costumes of villagers presented the "realistic" images of the public. He goes on to make a case that the subjects of his photographs are, in fact, collaborators who voluntarily show the detail of their everyday lives. From Navab's point of view, Sevruguin is not the Orientalist mystifying the Orient. Instead, he is a modernist who was guided by his curiosity and desire to document everything and everyone in Iran.

In contrast with Navab's conclusions, I argue it is naive to consider Sevruguin's early photography (mainly the picturesque landscapes) as merely driven by curiosity. As I have argued above, they replicate the scenography that typifies Orientalism. In terms of the scenes of the lives of the villagers, the basic representation of peasants in the Orient alienates everyday villagers from their historical context. The striking absence of time in the staged scenes with the crude landscapes signifies the primitive lifestyle of the villagers, as I discuss in more detail in the last chapter. Yet, just as his sense of identity changed from European to Iranian, as it is evident in his changing signature, his style of photographs also changed over the course of his career. During the unrests leading to the Constitutional Revolution (1906) and after the Naseri time, he provided an alternative perspective to the protests and represented the leaders and the political prisoners differently. One of his most distinctive photographs is from the imprisonment of Kirmani, Naser al-Din Shah's assassin (1986). In this photograph, Sevruguin humanizes Kirmani by focusing on his eyes and face, whereas Kirmani's portrait taken by the court photographer, Abdullah Mirza Qajar "shows him next to a guard on the […] stairs, wearing the same clothes and in a nearly identical position to Sevruguin's portrait. […] but each gives strikingly different impression […] as a chain rests on Kirmani's body and connects him to the uniformed guard" (Schwerda, 2015, p.178). In the discussion about Sevruguin, his photographic practice shows a transition from the Orientalist lens to the modernist, who was "as modern citizens, in the process subverting common European notions of a static and backward the Middle East" (Woodward, 2003, p.363)[23].

[23] My analysis of Sevruguin's narrative is informed in part by Ali Behdad's elaboration on Bohrer's perception of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory. In this sense, Behdad (2016) named Sevruguin's subjective position "as cultural *between-ness*, *hybridity*, and *ambivalence"* (p.73). Behdad rejects Bohrer's interpretation of *between-ness* as a remedy for the Orientalist aspect of Sevruguin's works. He explains "while these critics [Woodward (2003) and Bohrer (1999)] are correct in suggesting that resident photographers, perhaps because of their exposure to and contact with local cultures of the region, developed modes of representation that are neither monolithic nor purely hegemonic, they overlook the ways in which the circulation of these photographers' images in European markets and their inscription within Orientalism's photographic archive nonetheless implicate them in discourses of exoticism. These images therefore cannot be simply reassembled within the theoretical categories offered by either

To conclude the meso-level analysis, in this chapter, I discussed the process of producing photographs of Iran in the political and cultural context of the photography expeditions of the four European photographers highlighted in *Looking at Persepolis*. Despite the fact that Sevruguin contributed to the Shah's collection and the European expeditions in Iran, after many years living in Iran, his photographic practices shifted from representing Iran through the lens of monarchs and then Orientalism to a patriotic view of the country. His photographic practice — as it becomes independent of both the royal court and the colonial powers — offers an alternative perspective of the country during the Naseri period. In contrast to Sevruguin's photographic projects, the three other photographers contributed to European colonialism, whether through their work in archeological expeditions or training the Iranian military (in the case of Colonel Pesce). However, the careful selection of Sevruguin's photographs (Figure 10) in *Looking at Persepolis* leaves little room to distinguish his lens from the Orientalist lens of the three other European photographers. In fact, except for the exhibition's use of his photo of a train, all his images in the exhibition are almost identical to the Orientalist lens of the three European photographers discussed in this chapter. To examine the construction of Iranian national identity in the exhibition, in the next chapter, I conduct a micro-level analysis of *Looking at Persepolis*.

aesthetic discourse or postcolonial theory; rather, they must be studied in the context of particular practices, institutions, and relation of power to which the nineteenth century Orientalist photography belongs.

Chapter 5. Examining the Exhibition

5.1. The First View of *Looking at Persepolis*

From my experience of visiting Persepolis in Iran in-person, I was familiar with the architecture and symbols carved on the stones. I travelled to Fars to see Persepolis a few times during my childhood and later in my early twenties. I recall a crowded landscape with a long line-up of the visitors waiting to purchase tickets and enter the site. My visits took place during spring and summer, despite the hot weather, tourists were cramped under every doorway, on the staircases and the main terrace. Still, the largest crowd on a regular day was not comparable to the day of the Persian new year (Norooz). The first year after my grandmother passed away, our family ritual on Norooz was interrupted as we could not spend the first day of the new year alongside the eldest family member. Unlike previous years, we decided to celebrate the exact moment of the new year[24] away from home at Persepolis. After driving almost twelve hours on the cross-desert highway, we finally reached the destination, but the line-up of visitors made us wait one more hour. When we got to the entrance gate, families and friends were separated based on their gender. The female entrance had place for physical inspection but and a checkpoint to remind the visitors to cover up and always follow the appropriate Hijab during their visit.

As we stepped into the site, we searched for the countdown gathering point, but surprisingly, we were notified that no gathering was allowed either in the designated amphitheater or anywhere else. However, small family groups who set up their own Haft-Sin[25] in a corner and were quietly counting down. Since we did not bring our Haft-Sin, we formed a circle to celebrate the new year with a short traditional song. Soon, the visitors wanted to join our family circle, so some rushed to dance, and many came close to just listen. It did not take long to feel suffocated by the crowd; I could no longer see my parents. At that moment,

[24] The moment of vernal equinox.

[25] Haft-Sin is the seven symbolic items that is central to the celebration of Norooz.

the guards showed up and swiftly dispersed the people. I became even more aware of the state power when they told us that you might get arrested if you tried to celebrate Norooz at the site.

Figure 8 The Entrance view of The Polygon Gallery, from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Elmira Habibullah, 2018

At first glance, most of the photographs taken between 1850 and 1930 in The Polygon Gallery (for example, see in Figures 9 and 10) deceptively conveyed a bare landscape. The camera in these photographs was typically positioned in front of the ruins of the buildings or rock reliefs to capture an almost symmetrical postcard view from a distance. For those who were not familiar with Persepolis and did not know about the significance of the site and the history of the Achaemenid Empire before the rise of nationalism in Iran in the early twentieth century, the lack of human presence might not seem unusual. As an Iranian-Canadian, I was taken aback by their emptiness. While a century passed and hindered any comparison between my experience and the period of early photography in Iran, it was the Orientalist images from the archeological

expeditions that continued to influence Western views of Persepolis as the ruins of an ancient civilization that the West had the authority to research and preserve.

Figure 9 Hans Wichart von Busse (1933) Apadana Platform, from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Elmira Habibullah, 2018

Figure 10 Antoin Sevruguin (c.1900) Palace of Darius, from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Elmira Habibullah, 2018

Here, I want to return to the conspicuous lack of human figures in most photographs (see in Figures 9 and 10) in *Looking at Persepolis.* The lack of human figures directed attention to the building structures in what appeared to be a bare landscape. These photographs' clinical view of the architecture and reliefs were unlike contemporary photographs in postcards and picture books, which

depicted romanticized scenes with the backdrop of breathtaking sunsets or sunrises. In fact, the representation of the bare landscape with the ruins of an ancient civilization suggested that it was part of the larger ideological project of colonialism to save the world's heritage. Such a position assumes Iran and other countries are incapable of valuing and preserving their national heritage. Similar to what Derek Gregory (2003) describes as the production of "imaginative geographies" in the landscapes of ancient Egypt. These monumental traditions render the landscapes of an ancient civilization "as a series of planes, geometric, empty of human occupation; a vacant space abstracted from the modern world and awaiting its (re)possession by the forces of European history" (p.224). The control of the process of image-making during the emergence of photography in Iran and, more specifically, control of the production of visual knowledge facilitated "[…] an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness […]" (Said, 1978, p.6). In the discussion about photography within colonialism, Liz Wells (2004), curator, writer and Professor in Photographic Culture quotes Thomas Richard (1993) in her book, *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, and explains how colonizers were able to rule huge parts of the world with little military presence.

> From all over the globe the British collected information about the countries they were adding to their map. They surveyed and they mapped. They took censuses, produced statistics. They made vast lists of birds. Then they shoved the data they collected into a shifting series of classifications. In fact, they often could do little other than collect and collate information, for any exact civil control, of the kind possible England, was out of the question. The Empire was too far away, and the bureaucrats of Empire had to be content to shuffle papers (p.3).

The scientific materials, which are the products of knowledge accumulated about the colonialized subjects, construct a governing apparatus that maintains and normalizes an unequal Occidental gaze. In this sense, the accumulation of visual representations of the picturesque landscapes of Iran in the form of photographs and albums operates as an archive that regulates visual knowledge about "History" (Tagg, 2009, p.235).

> […] a regime that, as we have seen, implicates not only a certain practice of photography but also a practice of history. It is this regime that gives this practice of photography and this practice of history their disciplinary authority to call on the "mute testimony" of the "document" (ibid).

The photographs as documents and photographic practices constitute and determine the regime that governs and works to exclude what cannot be seen within its rules of knowledge. The exhibition's curatorial statement suggests that the photographs presented in *Looking at Persepolis* help to understand Iran's national history. However, I argue that the colonial framework of the photographs re-writes Iran's history of Persepolis as an ancient civilization that excludes Iranians from what was their ongoing history.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), at the micro-level, this chapter examines the photographs in terms of their colour, size, layout and thematic content, as well as all components of the exhibition, including the curatorial statement, etc. In *Looking at Persepolis,* the silver or golden colour of the photographs stood out from the gallery's white walls. The distinctive colours of the photographs were the result of three primary photographic processes: salt print, albumen print, and gelatin silver print. According to the exhibitions' catalogue (2018), the salt print was the most common medium used between the 1840s and the 1860s. It also was the main photography process used for printing the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis.*

> English inventor Henry Fox Talbot sensitized paper to light by wetting it with a mild solution of dissolved salt, blotting it and letting it dry, and finally brushing one side with a solution of silver nitrate. This allowed the paper to darken when exposed, a wash of sodium sulfate could be applied to fix the image and prevent the paper from darkening further (exhibition's catalogue, 2018, p.6).

The photographs labelled as salt print appeared to be golden or light sepia. Their images were slightly blurry; this process showed little to no details of the rock reliefs, which were the focus of the majority of Luigi Pesce's photographs in the exhibition. If not all, most photographs labelled as salt print were produced by Luigi Pesce, the Italian colonel. Due to the

short exposure time in this process, Pesce's works appeared to be fading away. This visual quality and washout colours signify a disappearing ancient past that has been undervalued by the locals or the Orient, and therefore this abandoned landscape calls out the European saviors.

Albumen silver print and gelatin silver print were developed after the 1850s and used in the production of the rest of the photographs in the exhibition. The images produced using these processes show defined details of rock reliefs because of their wider range of grey tones (see Appendix B). With technological advancement around the late nineteenth century, gelatin silver prints became the most common type of black-and-white photograph. Albumen and gelatin silver prints were the first commercial methods of image-making or albumen prints (exhibition's catalogue, 2018, p.6). Busse's use of gelatin silver enabled him to produce exquisite photographs of the details of Persepolis's rock reliefs with the high quality, compared to his salt prints. These works (see in Figure 14), which were mostly displayed in the second room of the exhibition, were the only examples of postcards of Persepolis. The detailed images of the reliefs signified the ancient civilization while, as discussed in Chapter 3, they simultaneously excluded contemporary Iran from its history by drawing a line between Iranian-ness and Persian-ness. The series of postcard images in *Looking at Persepolis* signified a souvenir from the Orient (as discussed in Chapter 3) that can be possessed by Europeans, and through their distribution in Europe, they construct the visual knowledge about an exotic distance landscape.

5.2. The Curatorial Statement and the Preferred Reading

The curatorial statement installed on the first wall of the exhibition is written by Pantea Haghighi, the guest curator of *Looking at Persepolis*. The

bilingual statement was aimed at English and Persian speakers. It identified the three prominent photographers showcased in the exhibition — the Italian Colonel, Luigi Pesce, the French explorer, Marcel Dieulafoy, and the Iranian commercial photographer, Antoin Sevruguin (see in figure 11).

نگاهی به پرسپولیس
دوربین در ایران، 1850–1930

نمایشگاه گردان مهمان: پانته ا حقیقی

اسناد مصور از حفاری های تخت جمشید در نزدیکی شیراز به عنوان یک شهر تاریخی که در آن جشن و مراسم تشریفاتی برگزار می گردید و قدمت آن به 515 سال پیش از میلاد مسیح باز میگردد، اهمیت ورود و معرفی دوربین در ایران را نشان می دهد. تصاویری از این کشور را می توان به سال 1842، یعنی تنها سه سال پس از اختراع داگروئوتایپ نسبت داد و در سال های دهه 1850، ایران میزبان اتلیه عکس های سلطنتی و همچنین دارای دپارتمان عکسبرداری در اولین دانشگاه به سبک غربی در کشور بود. مهم تر از آن، شاه حاکم در آن دوره، فرمان ایجاد مستندات مصور از خرابه های پرسپولیس را صادر نمود، به وضوح این نشان دهنده اهمیت این مکان .از منظر هویت ملی از دیدگاه او بوده است

این عکس های به ندرت دیده شده، در منابع متنوعی مانند آلبوم های سلطنتی، متون و مقاله های باستان شناسی و سفرنامه ها دیده می شوند. آنها عمدتا از سفرهای عکاسی به نام لوئیجی پس، سرهنگ ایتالیایی مستقر در ایران، که مستندات کامل جمع اوری شده از پرسپولیس توسط وی به شاه تقدیم گردید؛ مارسل دیولفوی، کاوشگر فرانسوی که عکس های گسترده خود را در یک مجموعه پنج جلدی منتشر کرد؛ و عکاس تجاری ایرانی، انتوان سوروگین، که تصاویر عکس برداری شده وی از پرسپولیس در نشریات داخل و خارج از کشور مشاهده می شوند، برگرفته شده اند. این نمایشگاه تلاش می نماید تا نقش در ظاهر مهمل و در واقع درست تصاویر مستند قدیمی پرسپولیس در ساخت- از منظر ایدئولوژی، باستان شناسی، و فرهنگ مصرفی- تصویری عظیم و باشکوه اسطوره ای تاریخی از ایران که یک ملت مدرن و نوین را با تاریخ کهن و با شکوه خود در هم .تنیده است، به نمایش دراورد

عکس های این نمایشگاه، به شکل سخاوتمندانه از مجموعه آزیتا بینا و الگار دبلیو سیبل، به امانت گرفته شده اند.

LOOKING AT PERSEPOLIS:
THE CAMERA IN IRAN, 1850–1930

Guest curator: Pantea Haghighi

The photographic documents of the ongoing excavations at Takht-e Jamshid near Shiraz, known as the ancient ceremonial city of Persepolis dating back to 515 BCE, reveal the importance of the camera's introduction into Iran. Photographs from the country can be dated as early as 1842, only three years after the invention of the daguerreotype, and by the 1850s Iran was host to a royal photographic atelier as well as a department of photography at the nation's first Western-modeled university. Crucially, the ruling Shah began to commission photographic documents of the ruins at Persepolis, clearly indicating the site's significance to his vision of national identity.

These rarely-seen prints have appeared in sources as diverse as royal albums, archeological treatises, and travelogues. They are largely drawn from the expeditions of photographers Luigi Pesce, an Italian colonel stationed in Iran, whose thorough documentation of Persepolis was presented to the Shah; French explorer Marcel Dieulafoy, who published his extensive photographs across a five-volume folio; and the Iranian commercial photographer Antoin Sevruguin, whose images of Persepolis appeared in printed matter both in Iran and abroad. The exhibition attempts to show the paradoxical role that early documentary photography of Persepolis played in constructing—through ideology, archaeology, and consumer culture—a grand, mytho-historical vision of Persia that wove a modernizing nation together with the splendour of its ancient past.

The photographs in this exhibition are generously on loan from the collection of Azita Bina and Elmar W. Seibel.

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TD THE READY COMMITMENT

Figure 11 Curatorial statement written by the guest curator Pantea Haghighi (in English and Persian), from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Habibullah, 2018

In the statement (see in Figure 11), Haghighi expressed her views about the importance of Persepolis and the evolution of early photography in Iran. In the first paragraph Haghighi writes:

> The photographic documents of the ongoing excavations at Takht-e Jamshid near Shiraz, known as the ancient ceremonial city of Persepolis dating back to 515 BCE, reveal the importance of the camera's introduction into Iran. Photographs from the country can be dated as early as 1842, only three years after the invention of the

> daguerreotype, and by the 1850s Iran was host to a royal photographic atelier as well as the department of photography at the nation's first Western-modeled university. Crucially, the ruling Shah began to commission photographic documents of the ruins at Persepolis, clearly indicating the site's significance to his vision of national identity (Haghighi, 2018).

This paragraph delineated three layers of the exhibition, including first, the historical significance of Persepolis; second, the importance of photography in Iran; and third the importance of photography for the Shah's nation-building project. Haghighi went on to identify the two main phases of early photography in Iran: the early use of the camera, which was taught at the first Western-modeled university in Iran; and the camera as the Shah's ideological tool for nation-building projects[26]. She referred to Dar ul-Funun (founded in 1851 by the Shah's Prime Minister, Amir Kabir) as "the nation's first Western-modeled university," which I discussed in Chapter 3. During this time, the formation of the first university significantly contributed to Iran's scientific achievements, but as discussed in Chapter 3, many Iranians considered the European style of teaching in Dar ul-Funun to be a sign of Westernization. Thus, for critics of the West, it symbolized the domination of European powers in Iran. Secondly, entrance into the university required high social rank, which reinforced the superiority of Persian elites and widened the pre-existing gaps between the social classes (Nasiri-Moghaddam in Abdi, 2008).

The second paragraph in the curatorial statement sheds light on early photography expeditions during the modernization of Persia.

> The exhibition attempts to show the paradoxical role that early documentary photography of Persepolis played in constructing — through ideology, archeology, and consumer culture — a grand,

[26] The commercial photographers who practiced the European style of photography to some extent contribute to the European ethnographic gaze whereas the Shah's collection aimed to represent the Shah as the sole power of the country (i.e. the aesthetic choices made by Antoin Sevruguin (see in Chapter 3).

> myth-historical vision of Persia that wove a modernizing nation together with the splendor of its ancient past. (See in Figure 11)

Haghighi identified the genre of early photography in Iran as documentary, but at the same time acknowledges documentary photographs were not merely used as the records of what existed between 1850 and 1930. They were also the Shah's ideological tools. He used them to impose his narrative of national identity to create a nation. Haghighi's reference to the importance of the site as a mythologized land of Persians pointed to the role of the ancient Persian civilization as a foundational pillar for constructing Iran as a modern country[27]. As discussed in Chapter 2, many scholars argue that Iran's elite class introduced and reinforced the modernization to the country, which widened the gaps between different social classes and led to public protests (Bill, 1970; A. Milani, 1999; Heidari et al., 2014; Kashani, 2017). Therefore, referring to the ancient Empire was a tactic to legitimize the Shah's power.

In the curatorial statement (see in Figure 11), Haghighi named only three photographers from the thirteen to eighteen photographers in the exhibition (eighteen includes five unknown photographers). They were three Europeans — Marcel Auguste Dieulafoy, Luigi Pesce, and Antoin Sevruguin — in her statement. However, during my visits, I noticed that *Looking at Persepolis* did not showcase any photographs or albums by Dieulafoy, which raised a question about the curatorial statement: why did Haghighi identify him as one of the significant photographers in the exhibition?[28] Though I did not receive an answer from the curatorial team, I can only speculate that during his stay in Persia, Dieulafoy inspired many archeologists through his excavation of many invaluable

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[27] As discussed in Chapter 2, Persia is the ancient name of Iran. In 1935, for the first time Mohammad Reza Shah from the Pahlavi dynasty made an ordered to change the name of the country to Iran. After the Islamic revolution of 1979, the name of the country became Islamic Republic of Iran. However, it is commonly known as Iran. In this thesis, I indicate the period from antiquity to Qajar's time, by using the ancient name Persia. For the period after 1935, I use the current name of the country Iran.

[28] When I found out the inconsistency between the listed names and the exhibited photographers, I tried to get in touch with the chief curator of the Polygon Galley, Helga Pakasaar, and the assistant curator, Justin Ramsay through email. Given the large number of exhibitions they were running, the communication had major delays, and eventually I did not receive an answer.

artifacts, which over the years found their way to the Louvre Museum's collection. In addition, perhaps there was a plan to include him in the exhibition, but it was not possible, and there was not enough time to remove him from the catalogue and statement.

Similar to her talk during the public tour (discussed in Chapter 3), Haghighi did not acknowledge the evident presence of Orientalists' lens in the exhibition. Instead, she notes these rare photographs show Iran through the eyes of the Shah (Habibullah, Field Notes, Dec 15, 2018). Her claim unified the complex projects and various ideological approaches reflected in each of the photographs to illustrate a picture of a monarch who understood the significance of photography and was enthusiastic to commission European photographers for his nation-building project. By dismissing both the significance of Europe's colonial projects in Iran and the Orientalist lens in most photographs in the exhibition, it is as if she sought to find the mythologized homeland of Persians through the lens of the colonizers. To analyze the Orientalist representation of Persepolis in the photographs, I will examine the thematic patterns of the content of the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis*.

5.3. Producing Home

In this section, I shall systematically analyze first the layout and then the content of the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* at the micro-level — the detailed analysis of the exhibition as a communication product (see the introduction). Next, I will outline the patterns of the thematic content of the photographs. The exhibition was designed in such a way that visitors entering the first room of the exhibition were placed in front of the oldest photographs (starting from the 1850s). the photographs were chronologically arranged, ending with images from the early twentieth century. The exhibition was presented in two separate gallery rooms; the first room was connected to the Denna Homes Gallery (sponsored by Denna Homes) by a glass door. The majority of the

framed photographs were installed on a total of eight walls. There were also three glass-enclosed showcases with albums and a selection of photographs.

After the curatorial statement, the first image was an extremely large vinyl reproduction of an entrance gate at Persepolis (see in Figure 12). To see the entire image of the two half-human guardian statues, visitors had to look up. As I stood facing the vinyl of guardians, I became aware of my presence in the space. In the exhibition, the large size of the vinyl might be intended to recreate the immersive experience of Persepolis. But despite the enormous size of the image compared to the photographs in the exhibition, the vinyl reproduction of the gates reduced the significance of what I remembered from my previous visits to the site. In fact, the image of the gates lessened what I recalled as the immersive feeling of the grandeur of the buildings.

The next work, which was the only photograph that focuses on a human subject, was the full-body portrait of Naser al-Din Shah by an unknown court photographer. The juxtaposition of the Shah's portrait placed at eye-level next to the vinyl photograph of the guardians followed the tradition of the Qajar's and Pahlavi's Shahs. As discussed in the introduction, since Achaemenid Kings are believed to be the honorable monarchs who founded a democratic ruling system, the Qajars and then Pahlavi Shahs tried to legitimize their reigns by representing themselves in relation to the Achaemenids. This tradition was evident in the Qajars period as the entrance of Qajars' buildings decorated with the Achaemenid motifs and Naser al-Din Shah's rock relief at the Haraz road signified the Shah's link to the ancient Persian Empire (Tahmasbpour, 2002). During the Pahlavi dynasty, the camera was utilized to associate the Shah with the ancient Persian Empire by taking photographs of Mohammad Reza Shah and his crown prince in front of the rock reliefs and statues of Persepolis. These went beyond the production of images and in 1971, Persepolis became the site of *Celebrations of the 2500 Anniversary of Persian Kingship* as Mohammad Reza Shah heavily invested in a series of festivals (starting from 1971), which occurred annually until the Islamic Revolution of 1979 (Mozaffari, 2014, 188-204). Though the title of the exhibition focused on Persepolis and early photography in Iran, the

careful position of the Shah's portrait highlighted the significance of the Shah in the exhibition. It was the only photograph isolated as a single image in the exhibition, unlike the rest of the photographs, which were organized in groups of four or five. By focusing on Naser al-Din Shah as an ideal Shah and a true successor of the justice-minded Achaemenid Empires, the exhibition glorified the Shah. Haghighi briefly mentions him in the curatorial statement as the main sponsor of photographic documents of Persepolis in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, which assisted him in building his vision of national identity.

Figure 12 View of the image of the status of the half human guardians and the Portrait of the Shah from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Elmira Habibullah, 2018

Regarding the overall arrangement of the photographs, as mentioned above, they were more or less chronologically organized, from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century (Appendix A). The layout of the photographs from the oldest to the most recent highlighted the process of the development of Iran in the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century from an ancient civilization until Naser al-Din Shah. The first photographs represented the ancient empire and the last image in the exhibition gave the

viewer a glimpse of modernity in Iran. After the portrait of the Shah, the photographs taken by Antoin Sevruguin were combined with four pieces from unknown photographers between the 1880s and 1930s. Though there was no information about the unknown photographers, their thematic content was similar to Sevruguin's photographs, showing different carved rock reliefs and the monumental buildings of the capital of Achaemenid. The rest of the space in the first room is dedicated to Hans Wichart Busse (the third wall see in Appendix A) and Luigi Pesce (the fourth wall see in Appendix A). There are a total of 5 albums and 2 photographs displayed in the glass-enclosed showcases in this room. The two cases included the widest range of materials in the exhibition with two albumen photographs on a canvas-like paper by Ali Khan Vali and albums with black or white backgrounds and decorated covers. As discussed in Chapter 3, the use of various backings was one of the main characteristics of photography during the Naseri period. In the second room, the Denna Homes Gallery, seventeen photographs by Hans Wichart Busse (1930) were displayed on the first wall. The smallest wall in the exhibition was covered with a large-size (from the ceiling to the floor) vinyl image of the details of the staircases with the carved reliefs showing an Achaemenid farmer carrying his calf to present to the Empire. Busse's ten photographs, from the Vatican album[29] (1933- 1934 c.), were displayed as framed photographs stretched on the next wall. In addition to this album, there was a glass-enclosed showcase of Franz Stolze with two albums (1882) and eight photographs. The images of these two albums were scanned and displayed on a tablet to protect the artifacts from sunlight. Similar to the four European photographers, discussed in Chapter 4, the black-and-white photographs by Stolze focused on the large size rock reliefs and broken pieces of Persepolis.

In addition to the photographs in the first room of the exhibition, many of the photographs in the Denna Home room were also by Busse. These photographs mainly focused on the exquisite details and symbols of the rock

[29] According to the exhibition's records, these photographs were selected from the Vatican album. Unfortunately, I did not receive any explanation to answer why it is named Vatican.

reliefs. The photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* ended with Sevruguin's work. As mentioned above, most of his photographs selected for the exhibition were images of the architectural elements of Persepolis. They reproduced the Orientalist gaze. However, as I argued in Chapter 4, his photographs documented in the second half of his career were the rare visual documents of the political uprising or protesters against Naser al-Din Shah, offering an Iranian nationalist view rather than an Orientalist one. The last photo of the exhibition was his photograph of the first railways in Iran. Unlike the rest of the exhibition, this work included human bodies (the passengers) and represented the sign of technological developments and modernity in Iran.

To show how the exhibition reflects an Orientalist discourse regarding the development of civilizations, I conduct a thematic analysis on its photographic content. First, I identify common thematic patterns, and then, I analyze the number of the photographs, their date of the production and, more importantly, the content represented by each photographer (see in Table 1). I do this in chronological order. This tactic enables me to cross-reference the photographic practices of the four photographers spotlighted in the exhibition.

Patterns of Thematic Content*:*

1. Representation of the monarch
    A. Portrait of Naser al-Din Shah in formal attire
2. Architectural elements of Persepolis
    B. Sassanid Relief
    C. Achaemenid Relief includes ceremonial relief and bear hunt relief (mostly close-up view of the site)
    D. Qajar Relief of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar commemorating
    E. Interior view of Tomb of Darius
    F. Tomb of Cyrus and Tomb of Darius
    G. Fragments of a torus with inscriptions

H. Achaemenid buildings, Terrace with a pair of sculptures, columns, gates, doorways, stairways and columns (include picture landscape)

I. Colossal winged human-headed bulls

J. Susa or Shusha excavation

K. Detail of a relief

L. Takht-i Suleiman

M. Tomb of Alexander I

N. Relief of combat or war

O. Relief stone of Guards and Guardians

3. Signs of modernity in Iran

P. Train and railway

4. Postcards

Q. Details of rock relief (close-up)

Table 1-Thematic categories of photographers at Looking at Persepolis

Photographer	Number of photographs	Year	Themes
Luigi Pesce	11	1850s	N, B, H, O, F
Luigi Pesce	Album (50 photos)	1850s	Inaccessible
Marcel Deiulafoy	0	1881-2	
Franz Stolze	8	1882	C, H
Unknown court photographer	1	1875	A
Ali Khan Vali	2	1870s	L
Franz Stolze	2 Albums 1st Album-Persepolis I (1882)- 69 photographic proofs	1882	C, H

	2nd album Persepolis- (volume I)		
Unknown photographer	5	1880s - 1930s	C, F, H
Reise assembled by H. Heber	1 Album Title: evinneresn gen sn Arabien und Persien	1896	O
Maurice Pillet	1 Album	c. 1912	J
Antoin Sevruguin	13	1902-34	B, D, E, G, H, I, P
Hans Wichart von Busse	59	1930s	H, M, K, F, Q
Hans Wichart von Busse	1 Album	1930s	H, I
Georg Joterbock	1 album: Excavation of Susa	1930	
Assembled by A.L.M. Nicolas	1 Album Title: Vues de Perse	undated	Inaccessible

Based on the table above, there were a total of eight albums dated from 1850 to 1930. Out of the total fifteenth to eighteenth photographers (including three unknown photographers) in *Looking at Persepolis,* the majority of the photographs (59) displayed on the walls were taken by Busse in the 1930s. The thematic pattern of the content of his photographs showed they mostly incorporated detailed views of the reliefs and titled postcards. The theme of the images in his album varied from the detailed views of the colossal sculptures to landscape views of Persepolis architecture.

Busse's photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* demonstrated his interest in capturing as much detail of the rock reliefs as possible. Unlike other photographers, his photographic practices included a wide shot of a picturesque landscape with the architectural elements and the close-up shots of the

Achaemenid's rock reliefs. A wide shot is a term used in photography when the entire (non-human) subject appears in the shot, but the subject is still recognizable as it is the focal point of the photograph. The wide shots highlighted the architectural elements, which were carefully aligned with the horizon's line with one-point perspective — similar to the wide shots of Luigi Pesce — as well as the flat (two dimensional) close up shots of the rock reliefs that were used as postcards representing Achaemenid soldiers, lions and bulls head, etc. Sevruguin, with thirteen photographs, was among the photographers with the most works on the display. In terms of thematic patterns, his photographs included a wide range of themes from the ancient reliefs to the nineteenth-century Qajar reliefs. As mentioned above, the exceptional photograph of the first railways in Iran by Sevruguin was the only image of the exhibition showing the sign of modernity in Iran.

The earliest album in *Looking at Persepolis* was by Luigi Pesce (fifty salt prints[30]) from 1850. He had a total of eleven framed photographs installed on the gallery wall display. The common theme of his photographs was similar to other European photographers focusing on the Achaemenid buildings, tombs and the images of Sassanian reliefs, the guards and combat scenes. The earliest photographs by an Iranian photographer were by Ali Khan Vali (1870), and five years later by an unknown court photographer (1875), who I am assuming was Iranian because (as mentioned in Chapter 3), many training photographs taken by the elites and court members during the Naseri Period were not signed or dated (Tahmasbpour, 2002). While there were five unknown photographers, who I am assuming were Iranian, as mentioned above, non-Iranians took the majority of the albums and photographs in *Looking at Persepolis.* From a total of 95 photographs and eight albums on display, only three of the photographs (no album) on display were taken by Iranian photographers. While I am not aware of the selection process of the photographs carried out by the curatorial team, it is clear that the photographs on display were carefully selected to represent a

[30] The number of photographs reported in this study does not include the number of pages in each album as this information was not available during the exhibition.

particular narrative. During my preliminary research, I noticed Bina and Seibel's collection includes a substantial number of court photographers and photographs by Naser al-Din Shah. Given the fact that the Shah assigned the court photographers to take part in his photography expeditions, insofar as *Looking at Persepolis* included very few of their images, the exhibition offered little to no window into the study of the indigenous Iranian lens (as defined in Chapter 3). However, it is important to mention the exhibition did not only represent Iranian national identity through the eyes of the Shah. In fact, as mentioned, it also praised the Shah by connecting his image to the capital of Achaemenid by positioning his image by the gates at Persepolis as a symbol of the pre-Islamic Persian identity. As mentioned earlier, the presence of a human figure in *Looking at Persepolis* was uncommon. There were only five instances where human bodies were present in the photographs: full-body portrait of the Shah in a formal attire posing on a staircase against an unknown building; the passengers on the train; and the use of individuals posing against an architectural element to mark the physical scale and emphasize the large size of the buildings. This type of the use of the human body appeared in the four photographs by Sevruguin and one by Busse.

The most common content of the photographs was the spotless architectural elements, massive empty landscapes, and the close-up shots of the rock reliefs, which focuses on symbols associated with the Achaemenid Empire, such as the Achaemenid soldiers and guards. The content patterns of *Looking at Persepolis* reaffirmed what I referred to as "the scenography" in my discussion about the Orientalist lens in early photography in Iran (see Chapter 3).
The careful selection of Sevruguin's photographs, which signaled Iranian modernity, offered a different perspective of the country and portrayed him as an Iranian nationalist and modernist — the photographers of the photo of the first railways of the country in the exhibition (as discussed in Chapter 4). He also was addressed as an Iranian commercial photographer in the curatorial statement (see in Figure 11). However, in contrast to his sense of identity as an Iranian, the thematic patterns of the content of his images of Persepolis selected for the

exhibition were almost identical to the Oriental lens of the three other European photographers. As I discussed in Chapter 4, unlike the rest of the photographers in *Looking at Persepolis,* Sevruguin's photographic practice and "lens" transitioned because of his growing sense of identity as an Iranian photographer and the different projects he took part of, including the expeditions commissioned by the Shah, Herzfeld's archeological project and many more. I discussed this in Chapter 4. With the rise of private studios in the early twentieth century, Sevruguin and many other photographers could practice photography independently, but they still relied on the funds from the elites to survive and continue their practice. In the twentieth century, the photographic institutions in Europe still controlled photography practices through the financial support they provided photographers; "the private collector, and the public museum and gallery, along with commercial sponsorship and public subsidy, exercised a significant degree of economic influence on developments [of photography]" (Wells, 2004, p.289).

During the second public tour at The Polygon Gallery (2018) and in the interview with Jeremy Shepherd from North Shore News (Dec. 2018), the guest curator of *Looking at Persepolis* described the collection of photographs in the exhibition as a presentation of the "reality" of Iran. She also added, "It [Iran] is not being Orientalized," and "that's what sets Iran apart: it [Iran] was never colonized." As I argued in Chapter 2, her claim regarding Orientalization in the photographs might be true if we were to merely seek the typical signs of Orientalism, like the physical presence of the colonizers against the backdrops of the exotic landscapes with the "Other" and marginalized natives who were often framed as slaves or/and props around the colonizers (Behdad, 1994, p.70-80). But, as I argued in Chapter 3, the use of scenography in the European photographs selected for *Looking at Persepolis* produced a stereotypical representation of the Orient. Though Iran was never officially taken over by Europeans, the apparatus of photography in Iran in the mid-nineteenth century was dominated by Orientalized narratives (Behdad, 2001), which to some extent was continued in the photographic practices of the early twentieth century.

Despite Haghighi's view of the photographs of Persepolis as a grand, mytho-historical vision of Persia (see the curatorial statement in Figure 11), thematic content patterns of the photographs reveal an unoccupied landscape of an ancient civilization, which symbolize an empty, abandoned land available to be tamed, conquered and colonized. The exhibition is not the only attempt of the Iranian diasporic community in Vancouver to reproduce their version of Iranian identity; there are other examples such as *Oh Nightingale* (2019) by Parviz Tanavoli and *Dissonance* (2020) by Gohar Dashti. The images in these exhibitions aim to distance themselves from the negative media narrative about Iranians as backwards. However, in *Looking at Persepolis,* Haghighi's nostalgic desire to root Iranian national identity in a democratic ancient past excludes the diverse ethnic backgrounds in Iran. It also reduces Iranian-ness to Persian-ness with its link to the nostalgic version of the ancient Persian Empire. Simultaneously, the use of European scenography and the rejection of the presence of the Orientalist lens in the exhibition contributes to self-Orientalization, rather than questioning the discourse of power in the country and especially the significant role of colonial powers in the royal court during the monarchial regime.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I examined the exhibition, *Looking at Persepolis* at The Polygon Gallery and its construction of Iranian national identity. I accomplished this by closely examining the Orientalist lens of the exhibition's selected photographs. Initially, I was interested in exploring the representations of Iranian national identity in the context of diaspora, and my research began with a visit to the exhibition in 2018. Before attending the exhibition at The Polygon Gallery, I assumed that I would be familiar with the images of Persepolis showcased at the exhibition. Three years later, I am still astonished by the unexpectedly romanticized images that were unlike my memories of Persepolis. It took me a long time to recognize why I felt largely disconnected from the version of the ancient civilization presented in the exhibition.

Throughout this thesis, I acknowledge my "positionality' (Clark and Ivanic, 1997) by thinking critically about Iranian national identity and drawing a link between my life experiences and my interpretation of the exhibition. My analysis, in part, is rooted in my positionality as a member of the Iranian diasporic community who lives in the BC's lower mainland. Since my focus is to examine the Orientalist lens of the exhibition, I delved into the photographs as the material of my study. To grasp the exhibition with all its complexity, it was also important to take into consideration how all other components of the exhibition (such as the curatorial statement, the exhibition's catalogue, etc.) contributed to the discourses and how they were communicated by the exhibition.

The Introduction (Chapter 1) laid out the overall structure of this thesis by identifying and delineating the key individuals responsible for the exhibition: the guest curator, who is a member of Vancouver's Iranian diasporic community and also Azita Bina and Elmar Seibel, the collector-owners of the photographs, who I met when they led the first public tour of the exhibition in 2018. As I explained, they own the largest collection of early Iranian photographs outside of Iran. The photographs were a small sample of exact copies of the photographs kept behind the closed doors of the photography archive at the Golestan Palace in Iran. I

outlined my analysis of *Looking at Persepolis* by pointing to the way it drew on nationalist discourses that identify Persepolis as a symbol of the Persian Empire and the roots of Iranian national identity. I also highlighted the use of early photography produced under the authority of the Shah and also Europeans, to construct Iran through different lenses. To investigate the photographs, I benefited from the framework of Norman Fairclough (1995) for Critical Discourse Analysis, which is used to study the communication products at macro, meso, and micro levels. To unpack the discourses of Orientalism and national identity in the exhibition, the thesis structure is based on these three levels. Chapter 2 and 3 examined the discourses of Persepolis and nationalism as well as the role of photography in constructing Iranian national identity at the macro-level, while Chapter 4 investigated the four dominant photographers highlighted by the curator in the exhibition at the meso-level, and lastly, Chapter 5 shed light on the details of the exhibition and the photographs at the micro-level.

In Chapter 2, to gain insights into the discourses about Persepolis, national identity in Iran, and European archeological expeditions, I discussed how the political instability of the Iranian monarchy paved the way for European interference in the country's internal affairs. Thus, Chapter 2 problematized the long history of the presence of colonial powers in the Qajar court and their economic and political dominance prior to the invention of the camera. In this chapter, I drew a link between the early archeological expeditions (starting from the eighteenth century) of Europeans in the Persian landscape and the history of the presence of Europeans in the country and photography projects in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I showed how constant competition between European powers in the royal court was central to understanding the colonial and specifically Orientalist ideologies in their photography expeditions in Iran.

Chapter 2 also discussed the role of photography in Iran under the authority of the Qajar Shahs (especially Mohammad Shah and Naser al-Din Shah). I demonstrated how the invention of the camera and technological advancements in Europe marked the arrival of modernity, which led to unrests and protests by nationalists and members of the public, who demanded

democratic, political, and economic reforms. This chapter argued that modernization in Iran could not be understood without an examination of how Iranians responded to the power relations of Europeans in Iran. There were two major criticisms of modernity in Iran. On the one hand, some Iranian critics defined modernity as "Westernization," and therefore, the emergence of modernity was perceived as a condemnation of anything that was associated with "traditions" (Mozaffari, 2014). On the other hand, other Iranian writers did not link technological advancements with a break in traditions. Instead, they identified the problem with the messengers of modernity, who were often European military personnel. In addition, by reinforcing the changes under the name of modernity, Europeans produced the binary of a civilized European versus "the rest of the word" as primitive people (Dabashi, 2007, p.18). Thus, I adopted Dabashi's (2007) term, "colonial modernity."

> The root of the paradox is not just the fact that we (like pretty much the rest of the world) received Enlightenment modernity through the gun barrels of European colonialism, but also that in the very pronouncement of the principle theorist of the Enlightenment we were cast as the negational shadows of people othered from us […]. (p.27)

In this sense, the importation of modernity from the colonial powers was not implemented through democratic institutions, but instead, it was imposed by the Shah (top-down) without any political and economic reforms. In this context, European photographers, who mainly were political diplomats or military personnel, functioned like other messengers of modernity.

Chapter 3 focused on the genealogical account of photography in Iran and the arrival of the first camera as a powerful tool of knowledge production. As the first camera was gifted to the Shah and was used only within the walls of the palace (Tahmasbpour, 2013, p.61), Richard Khan, a French diplomat who was already playing a role in the Qajar court, became the first-ever photographer in Iran. In this chapter, I discussed the early photographic practices of Orientalists and the common representations of the Orient in Egypt and Turkey (Ottoman Empire) to understand the similarities and differences between Orientalization

through the European productions of visual knowledge, during the same period in other countries (including Turkey and Egypt), and the photographs exhibited in *Looking at Persepolis*. The clear absence of the human bodies and the overt emphasis on Achaemenid's geometrical architecture in the exhibition made it initially difficult to identify the Orientalist lens in the exhibition. Similar to what Shaw (2018) defines as "the scenography of the sacred places," which is the Biblical reference to religious places (like Jerusalem) to generate a representation of ancient times, the photographs in *Looking at Persepolis* represented Achaemenid time as the Biblical reference to an ancient civilization. However, we need to keep in mind that Orientalist photography was not the only lens that represented the country during the Qajars. While I categorized the early photographic practices into two main groups — the Orientalist lens and the Shah's perspective, I argued the ideological approach of the Shah did not reproduce the Orientalist lens, although they are linked. In Chapter 3, I examined the link between the lens of the Europeans and the Shah by referring to the processes, politics, and institutions involved in the production of early photography in Iran. Despite the fact that the first photographers and instructors were Europeans, who presented their photographs to Naser al-Din Shah and next taught him the foundation of photography, the Shah soon perceived the camera as a scientific development that his court could use and a signifier of modernity that could be turned into a propaganda machine to perpetuate his regime. As the development of his Pictorial Reports demonstrated, the Shah designed the first photography institutions to present himself as the absolute power in the country and move forward in his nation-building project.

Returning to Persepolis, as the major site for photography and the exhibition's focus, Chapter 3 discussed the significance of the capital of the Achaemenid Empire for both the Shah and the colonial powers. The discussion about the photographs of Persepolis in the Shah's collection brought to light "the interrupted identity" (Dabashi, 2007) of contemporary Iran with two contrary components of "Persian-ness" and "Iranian-ness," which co-exist even though their ideologies differ greatly. I concluded this chapter by explaining how a

Persian identity rooted in the glorious past of Achaemenid presented the idea of a secular nation that challenges the contemporary state's narrative focused on Muslim-ness as the necessary part of Iranian-ness.

After my discussion about early photography production in Iran and the two overarching ideological representations of the country, in Chapter 4, I focused on the four photographers spotlighted in *Looking at Persepolis*. These four individuals and their photography expeditions exemplified the shifts in the political climate and the control of the different colonial powers over the country. In this sense, Chapter 4 chronologically represented the development of photography and the shift in the discourses of power in Iran. Thus, I contextualized the photographers with respect to their countries of origin and the relationship they developed with Iranians after residing in Iran, including the Shah and especially with the nationalists. While I employed Fairclough (1995) framework to examine communication products at a macro, meso and micro level, I approached the context of production in relation to the identity and the sense of authorship of the photographers, in particular Antoin Sevruguin. These four photographers are Marcel-Auguste Dieulafoy (1844-1920), Luigi Pesce (1828-1864), Hans Wichart von Busse (1903-1962) and Antoin Sevruguin (1851-1933). I argued their photography expeditions, which were carried out by different European powers, intertwined with the colonial projects of the colonizers in the Near East. The motivations for these expeditions were not just economic and political; they also included the determination to prove European racial theories. From the nineteenth century to early twentieth century, "the mythologized land" of Persepolis — in Haghighi's words — was not only the ancestral land of the Persian Empire but it also was perceived as the ancient civilization that somehow could solve "the myth of origin" (Smith, 2000, p.21) for Europeans. I discussed this in relation to Dieulafoy's expeditions and Herzfeld's research on the Aryan race as Christian ancestors of the Germans. The exhibition did not display any photographs by Dieulafoy, but the exhibition's catalogue (2018) and the curatorial statement mentioned his name and his five-volume folios (1884-1889) as an exceptional contribution to European knowledge about the country. In Chapter 4,

I addressed how Dieulafoy's detailed documentation of Persepolis in his five-volume folios guided future exploration during the French monopoly of Iran (1849-1930). But as I argued, Iranian scholars have pointed out his conclusions are best viewed as fictitious, and his research was considered unsystematic. His racial ideology identified Aryans and Greeks as related nations with the same collective cultural identity, which he supported by using the archeological artifacts of Achaemenid, despite the presence of evidence that made this conclusion highly unlikely.

The second photographer in the exhibition, Pesce, was commissioned by the Shah. In fact, he was an Italian Colonel who was in charge of modernizing the Iranian military. Though I could not examine his specific ideology because he did not produce any reports from his photography expeditions, it is evident that the nature of his project in Iran was related to military activities. Unlike Dieulafoy and Pesce, the first two photographers in the exhibition, Busse specialized in the photography of archeological sites and was a member of the German archeological project in Persepolis. I argued that his photographic practice must be understood in relation to the archeological expedition led by Ernest Herzfeld. In the rise of Iranian nationalism, Herzfeld's exceptional speech (1927) about the importance of preserving the national heritage was endorsed by Qajars and led to abolishing French monopoly. His strategic move is still considered as a result of his sincere nationalistic feeling for Iran (Jenkins, 2011), though it was a key for gaining access to Persepolis and beginning his expeditions. Through the findings of his archeological expeditions, Herzfeld played an important role in promoting the German version of the Aryan race. Even though Herzfeld's time in Iran was shortened when he lost his political allies during the last days of the Qajar dynasty and with the rise of Nazism in Germany, he was able to avoid returning to Germany by moving to the United States permanently. Finally, he left his collection in American museums and institutions.

In contrast with the earlier photographers, Sevruguin's photographic practice represented neither just an Orientalist nor a nationalist lens. Instead, his view of Iran fluctuated according to the shifts in his life, which influenced his

“positionality” (Clark and Ivanic, 1997). Simultaneously, the financial support provided by the Iranian and European photography institutions played a significant role in determining the subjects of his photography. In some projects, he was sponsored by the Shah to document the everyday lives of the villagers or the scenes of the executions of the Shah’s opponents, like Mirza Reza Kirmani. While in other cases, he was hired by Herzfeld to photograph Persepolis. On the one hand, his scenography and contribution to the European scientific representation of the Orient are undeniable. The unusual images of their remote villages and of poverty provided the visual evidence to reinforce the idea that the Orient was a primitive world. On the other hand, his rare photographs documenting the nationalist movements that led to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 were an alternative perspective that differed from the state narratives, which were reflected in photographs taken by the court photographers. Despite the prevalent Orientalist lens of the exhibition, Sevruguin was the only photographer who could not be considered as just an Orientalist. Unlike the three other European photographers, as I have argued, some of Sevruguin’s photographs from the last years of his career in Iran provided an alternative view of the country, including records of significant political events that could be the beginning of the formation of a democratic system (even if brief). However, the careful selection of his photographs in the exhibition presented an image of just an Orientalist.

In Chapter 5, I argued that despite the wide range of photographs taken by the four photographers described in Chapter 4, *Looking at Persepolis* mainly displayed photos of Persepolis that reproduced colonial scenography. However, there were two exceptions: the Shah’s portrait, which was taken by an unknown court photographer and the photo of the first Iranian railways by Sevruguin. In terms of the analysis of the exhibition, this chapter began with an overview of the exhibition and proceeded to a closer examination of the components of the exhibition, starting with the curatorial statement and the large vinyl poster located at the beginning of the exhibition. I then examined the photographs taken by

each photographer; this chapter included a close examination of the photographs in terms of their colour, size, layout, and thematic content.

Though the exhibition combined the European photographers with five court photographers, the thematic content of the photographs mainly included the picturesque landscape shots of Achaemenid. This showed how the exhibition drew on the representation of the ancient Persian civilization through the Orientalist lens to re-produce Iranian national identity. I concluded that the exhibition suggested two paradoxical views; first, the curatorial statement and commentary made by Haghighi (during the public tour and the interview with the local media) pointed to the mythologized ancestral land as the source of Iranian identity. But second, the scenography of the photographs of Persepolis illustrated the stereotypical representation of the Orient. In fact, the photographs in the exhibition pointed to the Orientalization of Persepolis, which contradicted with what seemed like a straightforward representation of Iranian national identity from the perspective of the guest curator. I argued that the attempt to reconstruct Iranian national identity through the European lens led to self-Orientalization. Although the photograph of Iranian railways by Sevruguin suggested a glimpse of a technologically advanced country, the overall juxtaposition of this piece with the rest of the exhibition underscored the theme of s glorification of the monarchial system through an Orientalist lens.

Though the use of “grand myth-historical vision of Persia” and the link to the ancient Persian civilization might be an attempt to challenge Western media’s Islamophobic images of Iranians as a threat to Canada. However, the exhibition brought forward the Shah’s version of Persian-ness as a remedy for Muslim-ness associated with Iranian-ness. The Shah’s version of Iranian national identity excludes many diverse Iranian communities and democratic movements. In addition, showing the country through the Orientalist lens and the lack of critical consideration of the presence of the colonial powers in Iran reproduce the same power relations involved in the construction of the Orient and the Occident. Simultaneously, I argue that this vision of the homeland glorifies the oppressive Qajar dynasty and particularly, tyrannical rulers like Naser al-Din Shah. It is

important to mention that I began my study wondering who was the intended audience. After examining different layers of the exhibition, I am still unsure how to answer this question. Did the exhibition represent the mythologized homeland of Persians through early photography for Iranians? Or it reconstructed the Iranian identity to be displayed for Canadians. The question is still lingering as it is unclear if it was intended for the Iranian diasporic community or mainstream Canadians.

In terms of the limitations of this study, I initially had planned to examine the larger context of the Iranian diasporic community in Vancouver and interview the members of the community who visited the exhibition. But I realized if I was going to include a study of the diasporic community, in addition to the institutional and historical research that I conducted on the photographs, it would require fieldwork, and interviews, as well as possibly surveys, and studying the community's cultural institutions and the events concerned with Iranian national identity. This could be another interesting subject for further examination. In particular, it would be crucial to investigate the involvement of the Iranian diasporic community in the cultural activities, the cultural centers and Persian-language media (including magazine, radio, TV, etc.) throughout North Vancouver and the lower mainland.

This research study also encountered additional challenges. First, the subject of study (early photography in Iran) is an understudied topic. Since these photographs represent early photography in Iran and are a part of the Shah's collection, the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution of 197 has left the majority of these photographs remain inaccessible to scholars and members of the public and scholars. As a result, under the contemporary Islamic Republic of Iran, there have been a limited number of studies about early photography in Iran, especially, the Shah's collection. This is because the contemporary Islamic regime considers any research about this period as praising the monarchial system, which challenges the current ruling system of the country. Researchers who pioneered the study of early photography often published their works in Persian, which required translation. Speaking Persian as my mother tongue gave

me the privilege of accessing their writings, but I also recognize my translation might be influenced by my interpretations of their texts. Secondly, while I am grateful that the curator and assistant curator were responsive to my many queries during the exhibition and shortly after the closing, given the schedules and deadlines, it was difficult to receive further clarification about the photographs of Marcel August Dieulafoy after the exhibition closed. This problem hindered collecting more information about the gallery's decision about various aspects of the exhibition.

For future studies, I believe an examination of the re-construction of Iranian national identity through the cultural productions of the Iranian diasporic community could be an interesting topic. While both Persian-language radio and TV channels (in Vancouver) actively produce content, it would also be interesting to conduct a study on radio production (like Ahadi's 2016 study in Stockholm) and another study focusing on TV programs. At the same time, the examination of media is not the only way to study the Iranian diasporic community; there are many cultural events across Vancouver organized by the various Iranian cultural centres. The study of these events can focus on how different festivals, including Norooz, Tirgan and Chahar Shanbe Soory signify Iranian national identity. Simultaneously, it would be interesting to draw a link between the representation of Iranian national identity in mainstream Canadian galleries and media.

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Appendix A.

A Detailed list of exhibition materials

Room 1, Wall 1

Description	Language
Guest Curator Statement: Pantea Haghighi	Farsi & English

Photographs on Wall 2

Number	Photographer	Exhibition Title
Large size vinyl image of the gate at Persepolis	The name is inaccessible	The title is inaccessible
1	unknown court photographer	Figure of Nasere al-Din Shah in formal Attire
4	3 Antoin Sevruguin 1 unknown photographer	1. Sassanian Relief of Shapur 2. Tomb of Darius I (unknown photographer) 3. Qajar Relief of Naser al-Din Shah (inspired from Achaemenidian relief) 4. Sassanian Relief of the Investiture of Narse al-Din Shah
4	2 Antoin Sevruguin 2 unknown photographer	1. Interior view of Vestibule, Tomb of Darius I 2. (unknown photographer) Apadana, Persepolis- c.1902-5 3. (unknown photographer) Tomb of Cyrus the Great late 19th 4. Fragments of a Torus with inscription to a palace rebuilt by Artaxerexes c. 1885

9	7 Antoin Sevruguin 2 Unknown photographer	1. Apadana-detail View of a Wall 2. West Jamb of the Southern Doorway, Central Building 3. Monumental Staircase 4. Platform of the Apadana with Reliefs 5. Colossal Winged Human-Headed Bulls 6. Unknown Photographer (late 19th century) 7. Unknown Photographer-Detail- Triumph of Shapur c.1880s-1930s 8. Detail-Boar Hunt relief 9. Tachara (Palace of Darius I)

Photographs on Wall 3

Number	Photographer	Title
7	Hans-Wichart Busse[31] (1932-1933)	Detail from Apadana
9	Hans-Wichart Busse (1932-1933)	Detail from Apadana
3	Hans-Wichart Busse (1932-1933)	Detail from Apadana

Photographs on Wall 4

Number	Photographer	Title
3	Luigi Pesce (1850s)	Relief of Lion Relief Sasanian and Persian Guards Relief of Achaemenid
4	Luigi Pesce (1850s)	Sasanian Relief attributed to Ardashir I Sasanian Relief attributed to Shapur II Relief depicting BahramII Naqhsh-e Rustam

[31] As appeared in the exhibition's catalogue and nametag.

4	Luigi Pesce (1850s)	Guardian Man-Bull of the eastern doorway Guardian Bull of the western doorway Hero's Combat with Horned-lion head monster Relief of King and His Attendants

Showcase Table 1- Centre of the Room 1

	Photographer	**Year**
Album 1	Mauric Pillet	1912 c.
Album 2	Georg Joterbock	1930
2 albumen photographs	Ali Khan Vali	1870

Showcase Table 2- at the Corner of the Room 1

	Photographer	**Title**	**Year**
Album 1 (50 photo) salt print	Luigi Pesce	unidentified	1850s
Album 2 Evinneresn gen sn Arabien und Persien	Reise assembled by H. Heber	unidentified	1896
Album 3 Vues de Perse	Assembled by A.L.M. Nicolas	details of guards	undated

Denna Homes Gallery, Room2
Photographs on Wall 5

Number	**Photographer**	**Title**
3	Hans-Wichart Busse (1930 c.)	View of Platform from Persepolis

4	Hans-Wichart Busse	Four Un-titled Photographs-columns (landscape)
4	Hans-Wichart Busse	Terrace Gateway- Apadana platform
1	Hans-Wichart Busse	Tomb of Artaxerexes
4	Hans-Wichart Busse	1- Apadana platform 2- Procession of Medes Mounting Staircase of Trypylon 3- Three columns overlooking the Northern half of monumnetal stairway 4- Persian Guardsmen on Apadana stairs
1	Hans-Wichart Busse	Court of the Tripyton (with an unknown man with a dog)

Photographs on Wall 6

	Photographer	**Subject**
Vinyl poster mounted on the entire wall-silver tone (n.d.)	The name of the photographer is inaccessible	The image of guardian gates

Photographs on Wall 7

Number	**Photographer**	**Title**
10	Hans-Wichart Busse	The Vatican Album- gold-toned silver gelatin prints, c. 1933-34

	Detail of each photograph: 1- View of the platform, Persepolis 2- Susian Guard 3- Tribute Procession 4- Gate of All lands 5- Head of a Human-headed Bull 6- Detail of a relief of a Hand Holding a flower Bud 7- Relief of on Attendant 8- Palace of Darius I 9- Head of a Bull from a Double- Protome Capital 10- Thombs of Achaemenid Kings

Showcase Table 3

Number	**Photographer**	**Title**
4 photo	Franz Stolze	from album1
4 photo	Franz Stolze	from album 2
Album 1	Franz Stolze	Persepolis I (before 1882)- 69 photographic proofs
Album 2	Franz Stolze	Persepolis- (volume I)- 1882

iPad tablet

Scanned images of 2 albums by Franz Stolze

Photographs on Wall 8

Number	**Photographer**	**Title**
3	Hans-Wichart Busse	1- Excavation of passage 2- Tomb of Darius the Great 3- unidentified title
6	Hans-Wichart Busse	un-numbered post card series

1	Antoin Sevruguin	train

Colour tone

Hans-Wichart Busse	gelatin silver & gold toned silver gelatin prints
Antoin Sevruguin	silver and gold toned
Luigi Pesce	salt print- gold toned or light Sepia (lighter than Busse's photographs)

Appendix B.

Figure 13 Hans Wichart von Busse- view of platform of Persepolis(1930s) from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Elmira Habibullah, 2018

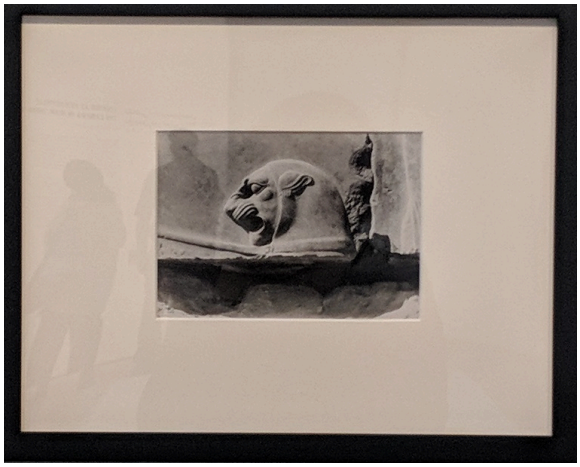

Figure 14 Details from Apadana in Persepolis- from unknown postcard series (1930s) from Looking at Persepolis at The Polygon Gallery, photo by Elmira Habibullah, 2018